

# Your Best Year *Ever*

WORKBOOK



# Your Best Year *Ever*

W O R K B O O K

NAME \_\_\_\_\_



# Contents

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>4</b>
EXERCISE 1: <i>Last Year's Wins</i>	
<b>LESSON 1 / BELIEVE THE POSSIBILITY</b>	<b>18</b>
BONUS 1: <i>2 Common Limiting Beliefs</i>	
BONUS 2: <i>Scarcity vs. Abundance</i>	
EXERCISE 2: <i>Limiting Beliefs vs. Liberating Truths</i>	
<b>LESSON 2 / COMPLETE THE PAST</b>	<b>36</b>
BONUS 3: <i>The Gratitude Advantage</i>	
EXERCISE 3: <i>After Action Review</i>	
<b>LESSON 3 / DESIGN YOUR FUTURE, PART 1</b>	<b>56</b>
EXERCISE 4: <i>Next Year's Hopes and Dreams</i>	
<b>LESSON 4 / DESIGN YOUR FUTURE, PART 2</b>	<b>68</b>
BONUS 4: <i>Using Habits To Achieve Your Goals</i>	
BONUS 5: <i>SMARTER Goal-Setting Templates and Examples</i>	
EXERCISE 5: <i>Setting SMARTER Goals</i>	
<b>LESSON 5 / FIND YOUR WHY</b>	<b>90</b>
BONUS 6: <i>Track Your Progress</i>	
BONUS 7: <i>An Action Plan for the Overwhelmed</i>	
EXERCISE 6: <i>Defining Your Why</i>	
<b>LESSON 6 / MAKE IT HAPPEN</b>	<b>108</b>
BONUS 8: <i>Activation Triggers</i>	
BONUS 9: <i>The 5 Rs of the Quarterly Preview</i>	
EXERCISE 7: <i>Determining Your Next Steps</i>	

# *Introduction*

---

## → Who do you want to become?

It's the most important question as you begin this journey. Your Best Year Ever isn't just for setting goals—it's a path to lasting transformation. Goals are about what you achieve, but even more, they're about how you grow in the process.

If you're here, chances are you're dreaming of more. You want to grow into your full potential, to step outside your comfort zone and into a life that's richer, fuller, and more meaningful. If that sounds like you, you're in exactly the right place.

And there's no better time than now. Milestones like birthdays, life transitions, or New Year's Day create natural moments to reflect and reset. Psychologists call it the fresh-start effect, and it's a powerful opportunity to translate dreams into actionable goals.

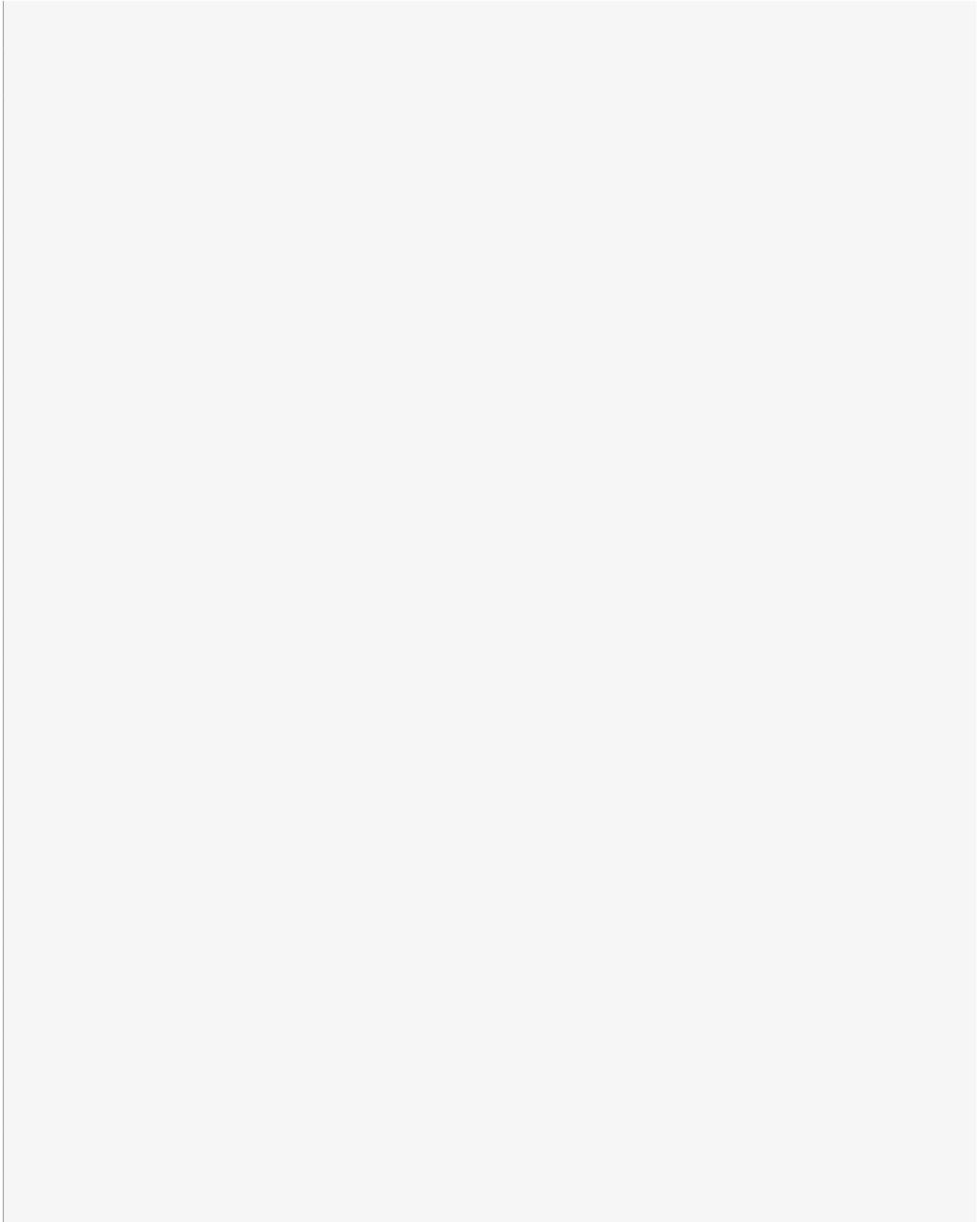
Whether the past year has been a struggle you're ready to leave behind or a success that's inspired you to reach even higher, you're right where you need to be. The future is wide open and brimming with possibility.

Of course, challenges don't vanish with the turn of a calendar page. New obstacles will emerge, but so will opportunities. Every day, you have the potential to create meaningful change in your life. In the end, it comes down to you: your choices, your actions, your commitment.

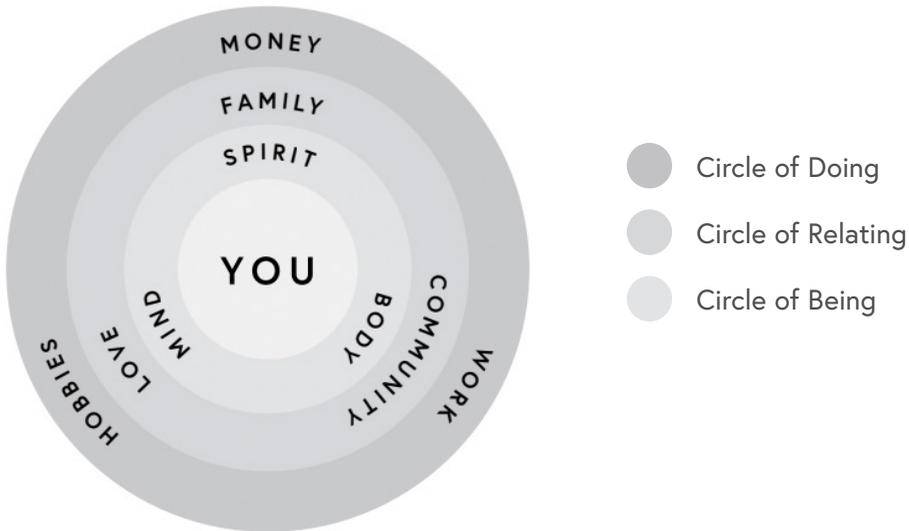
*Every day, you have the potential to create meaningful change in your life.*

It is not that we have a short time to live, but that we waste a lot of it.

SENECA



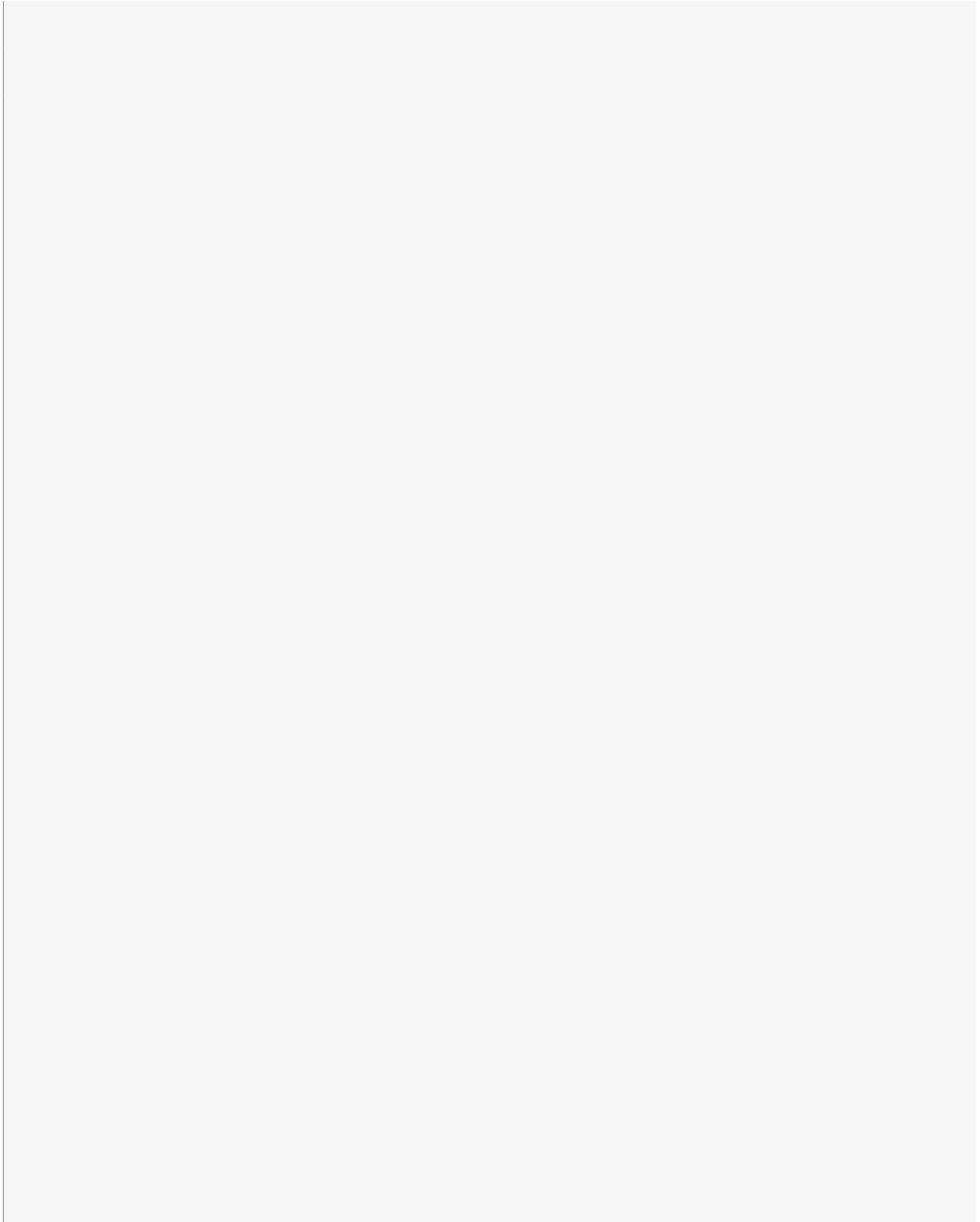
Now, let's take a moment to look ahead. Imagine it's twelve months from today. What does your life look like? Who have you become? To envision that future, consider the nine primary domains of life, organized into three key circles:



What do you hope for in each of these life domains? Whatever has happened in your past, it's possible to make this year your best yet, even in those areas where you've suffered serious setbacks. Your Best Year Ever will show you how.

Sometimes, you have to look back in order to understand the things that lie ahead.

YVONNE WOON



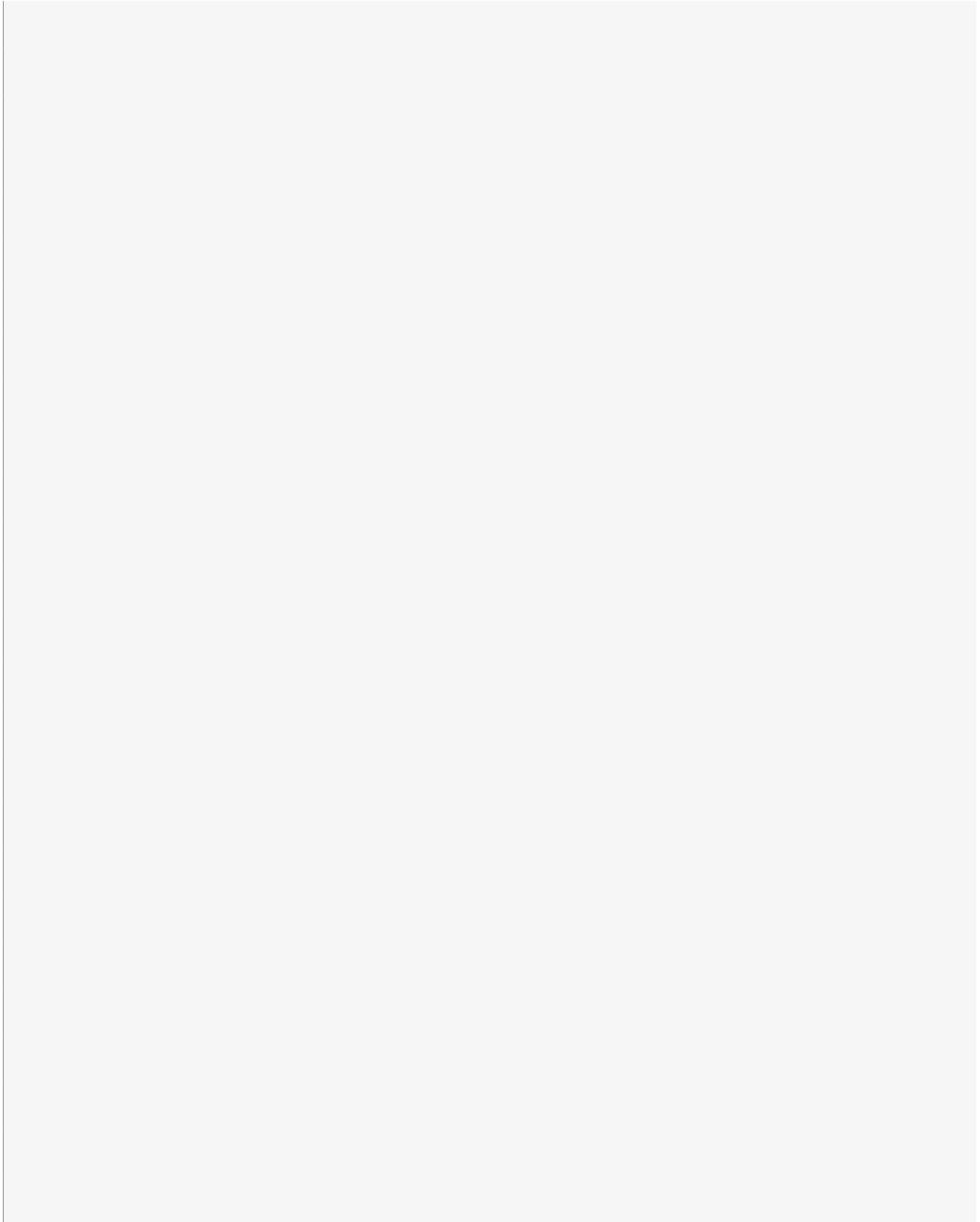
→ The program is based on four key assumptions.

- 1. THE FUTURE IS UNWRITTEN, AND YOU HOLD THE POWER TO SHAPE IT.** This idea, which we'll explore further in Lesson 1, is crucial to grasp from the start. As long as today is still unfolding, you have the ability to influence tomorrow for the better.
- 2. SUCCESS REQUIRES BALANCE ACROSS LIFE'S KEY DOMAINS.** Why? Because every area of life is interconnected. Your physical health impacts your work performance. Stress at work affects your home life. Challenges at home influence your emotional well-being—and the cycle continues. To live your best year ever, you need to give each domain the attention it deserves. The good news? Progress is always possible, no matter how far off track you feel. You don't have to settle for the status quo. Growth and positive change are within reach if you're willing to invest in them.
- 3. GOALS ARE ABOUT MORE THAN ACHIEVEMENT—THEY'RE ABOUT TRANSFORMATION.** This is where we began. Reaching your goals is rewarding, but the true value lies in who you become along the way. The journey toward your best year ever isn't always easy—it's meant to challenge you. Goals push you beyond your comfort zone and into the space where growth happens.

It's in this discomfort zone that you realize your potential, develop resilience, and build new capabilities. As you strive to achieve more, you also become more. The process changes you for the better, shaping not just what you accomplish but who you are.

Everybody ends up somewhere in life. A few people end up somewhere on purpose.

ANDY STANLEY



- 4. YOU NEED A SET OF WRITTEN GOALS TO GUIDE YOU.** Why written? You've probably heard of the supposed Ivy League study proving written goals lead to greater success. While that study has been debunked, the benefits of writing your goals are very real.

Professor Gail Matthews of Dominican University of California did her own study. She tracked more than 250 people from all walks of life—entrepreneurs, executives, lawyers, teachers, artists, and more. At the end of the study, she found that you have a 42% greater chance of achieving your goals if you just write them down.

Written goals are the foundation for success. Why? Writing forces you to clearly define what you want. It transforms a vague ambition into a bullseye. Having that kind of clarity helps you connect with your goals on an intellectual and emotional level. It builds resolve for when the going gets tough. Writing also motivates you to take action and reminds you to keep going. As you review your written goals, it prompts you to pursue the next most important step.

Everyone has fears and frustrations based on the past. It would be easy to address them by making some New Year's resolutions. But resolutions don't work. We know that.

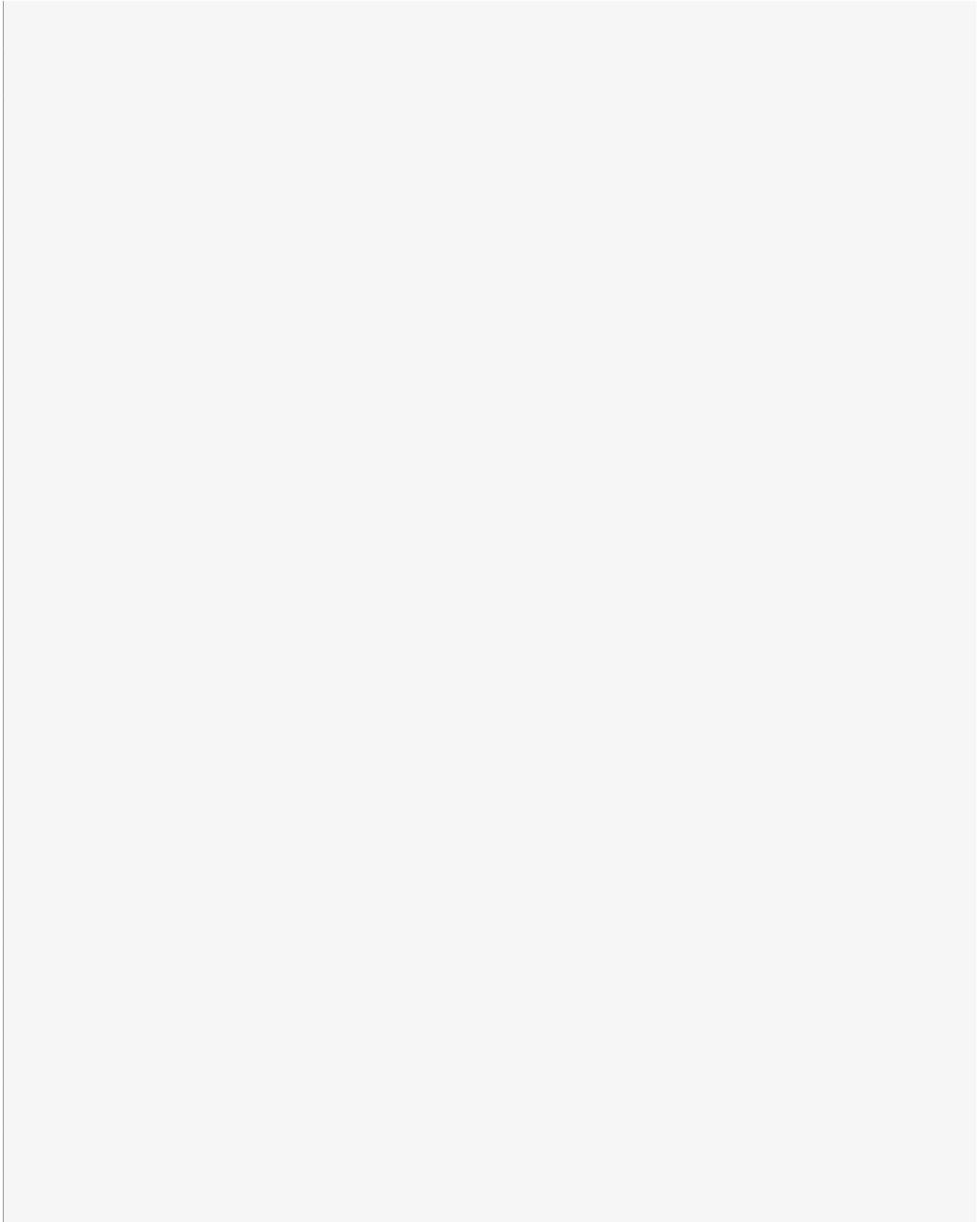
Most resolutions focus on what we were unable to achieve last year. Setting resolutions might make you feel good in the moment, but they tend to fade very quickly. Before long, we forget all about them. Worse, when we do think about them, we feel like a failure all over again.

Finally, we self-sabotage and decide change is impossible. If you want a fresh start that turns into your best year ever, you need a proven goal-achievement system.

*You need a proven goal-achievement system.*

If you don't risk anything, you risk even more.

ERICA JONG



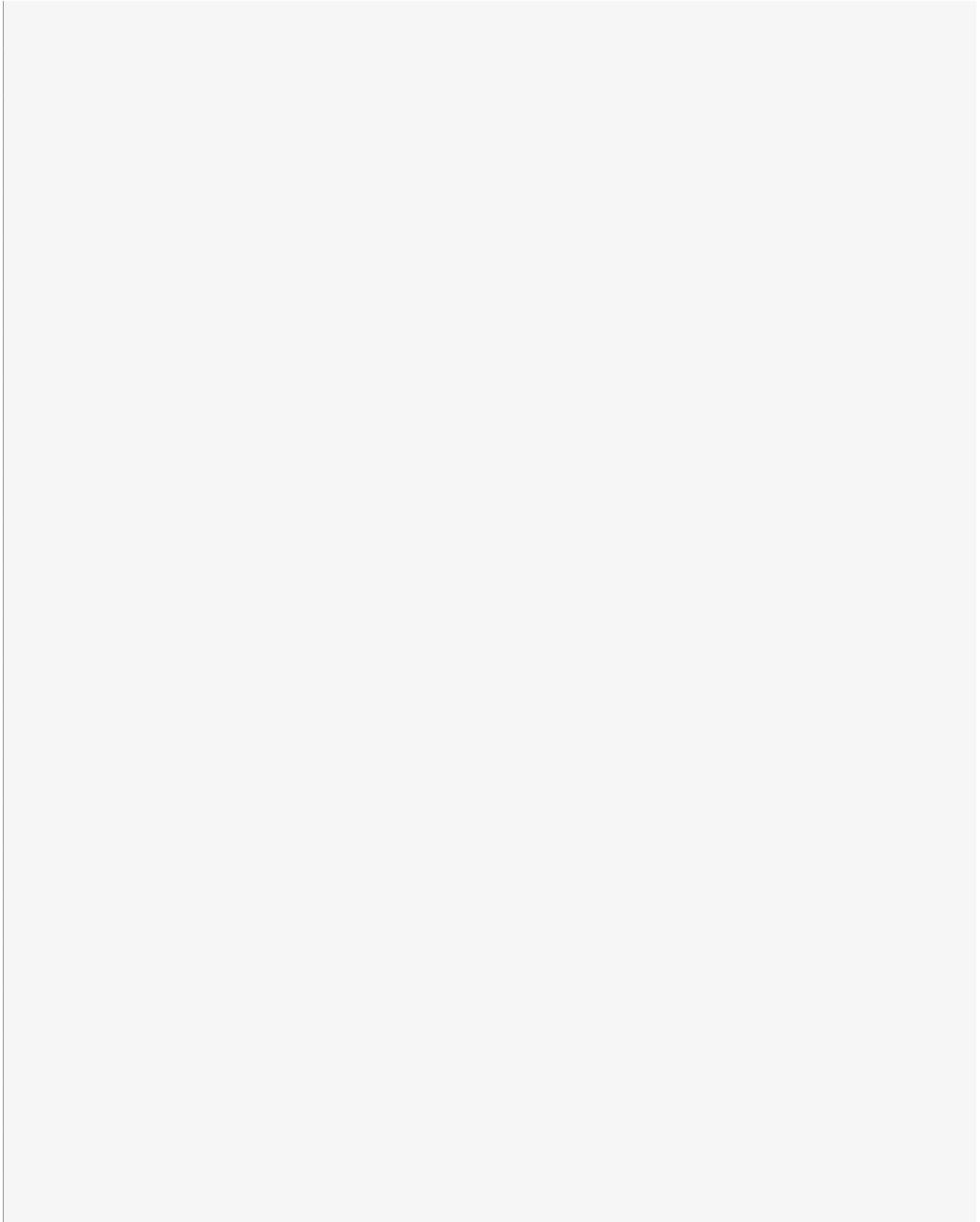
Based on the four key assumptions we just covered, this course will show you how to turn your hopes for the coming year into an actionable plan that can become your new reality.

→ There are six core lessons.

- **LESSON 1: Believe the Possibility** reveals three truths about your beliefs that will help you overcome doubts. This lesson will show you how to shed limiting beliefs and imagine what a breakthrough year might mean for your life.
- **LESSON 2: Complete the Past** will show you how to get closure on your past and step more confidently into your future. We will give you a four-step system to analyze the past for what worked—and what didn't—so you can move forward and design the year to come. A year that excites you. A year that promises more growth and achievement than you might even believe is possible.
- **LESSON 3: Design the Future (Part 1)** helps you start connecting with what you want. Identifying your deep desires and aspirations is the most effective starting place for goals.
- **LESSON 4: Design the Future (Part 2)** introduces a seven-part framework for setting well-designed goals that work. These goals will become a guiding vision for the months ahead. This proven framework will give you a portfolio of meaningful, effective, written goals that you can tackle right away.
- **LESSON 5: Find Your Why** helps you define the most powerful motivator there is: your why. Once you nail this piece, you'll be unstoppable.

Whatever your Other Shore is, whatever you must do, whatever inspires you, you will find a way to get there.

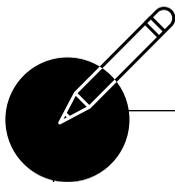
DIANA NYAD



- **LESSON 6: Make It Happen** covers the proven tactics and daily actions necessary to help you accomplish the goals you've set.
- 

*When you're done with Your Best Year Ever, you'll have:*

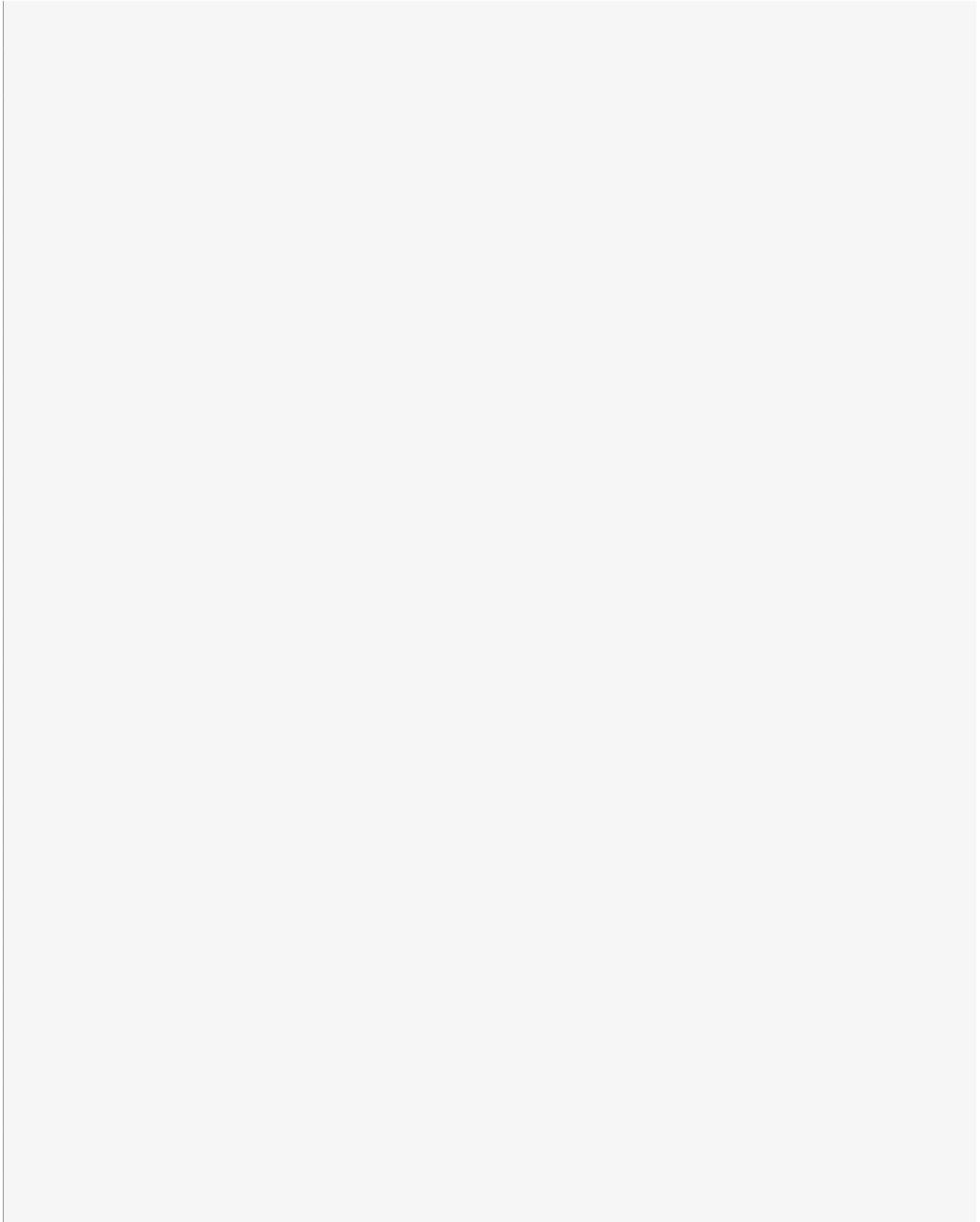
- ✓ A powerful sense of what's possible in the coming year.
- ✓ Closure on the past year and a renewed sense of hope and gratitude.
- ✓ A written set of goals that inspire you to take action.
- ✓ A clear and compelling rationale for sticking with your goals when the going gets tough.
- ✓ Proven implementation tactics to take your goals from dream to done.



To get started, complete **EXERCISE 1** on page 16. Take some time to write down your wins from the past year so you can start this process with a mindset of gratitude and confidence.

In my years, I have seen that people must...make their own good fortune.  
The bad will come or not come anyway.

OCTAVIA BUTLER



## EXERCISE 1

# *Last Year's Wins*

## INSTRUCTIONS AND EXAMPLE

It's vitally important to start with the positives. Use the space on the next page to list your wins from the past year. Despite whatever challenges you may have faced, there are always some wins! Write them down, and take a moment to celebrate them.

**LAST YEAR'S WINS**

I paid off my car!

I walked for thirty minutes five  
days a week.

I instituted a weekly date night  
with my husband.

I read twelve books.

I taught my son how to skate.

I started going to a counselor.

---

---

---

---

---

## LAST YEAR'S WINS


## LESSON 1

# Believe the Possibility

---

The biggest barriers we face in creating the lives we want are the ones inside our own heads. In this lesson, we're going to look at how your beliefs shape your thoughts and actions—especially how they limit you. When it comes to creating your best year ever, it's important to recognize three truths about your beliefs.

### TRUTH 1

## Your Beliefs Shape Your Reality

We tend to experience what we expect. Our expectations shape what we believe is possible, influencing our perceptions, actions, and ultimately, our reality. While external circumstances can sometimes derail our goals, success often hinges on distinguishing reality from the stories we tell ourselves.

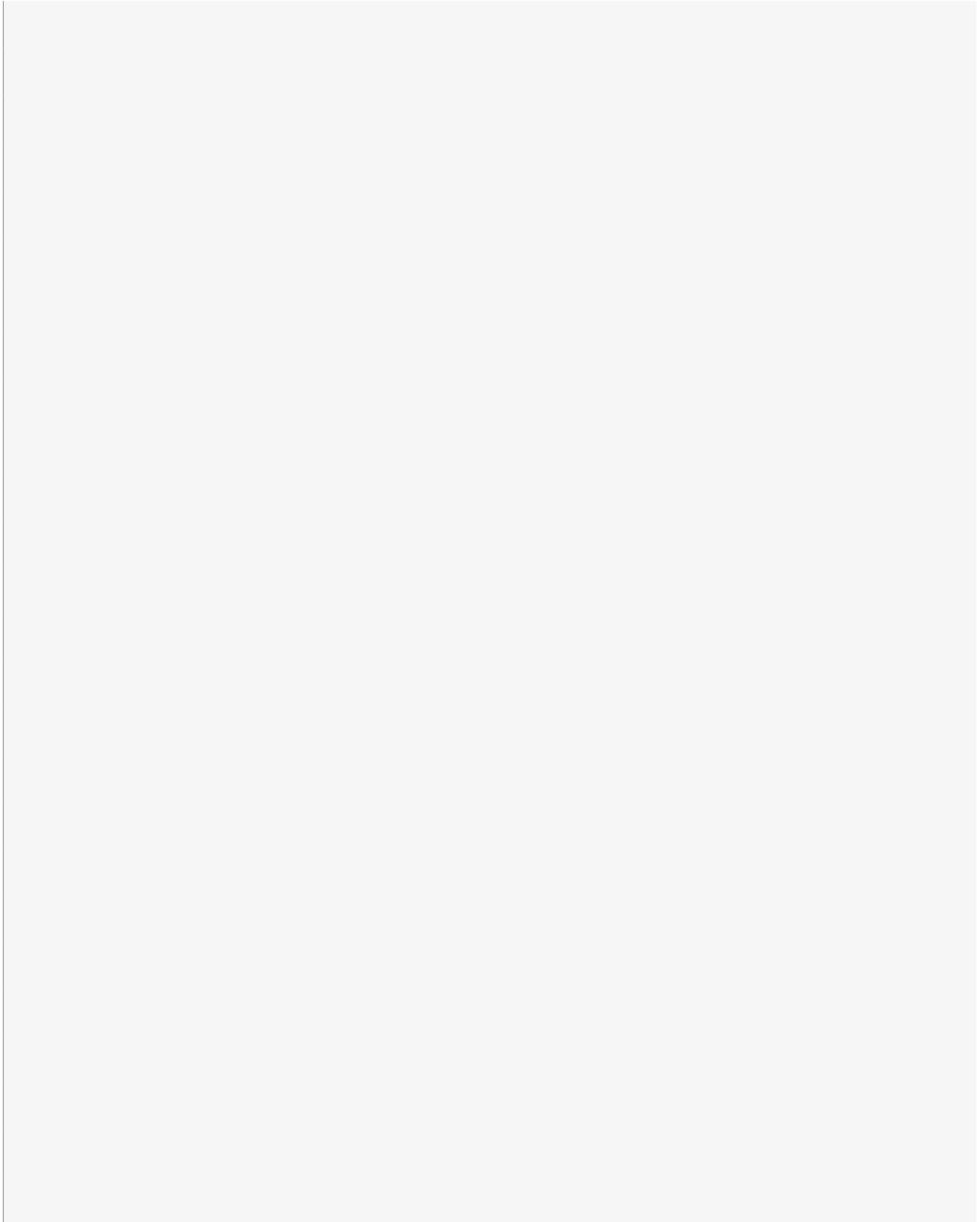
*We tend to experience what we expect.*

One of the biggest obstacles to achieving goals is believing they're impossible. Studies on smoking cessation, alcohol use, and exercise show the same result: when we believe change is possible, success follows. But if we think we can't, we're far less likely to even try.

Why does this happen? Repeated setbacks can lead to limiting beliefs about our abilities. We start seeing ourselves as less capable or unlucky, convincing ourselves good things aren't meant for us. These beliefs hold us back from attempting, let alone achieving, our goals.

Whatever you are meant to do, do it now. The conditions are always impossible.

DORIS LESSING



It's a form of self-protection—the easiest way to avoid disappointment is to avoid hope. But that kind of thinking limits success and poisons our potential. The stories we tell ourselves directly shape the reality we experience.

So, what changes to your thinking could expand your sense of what's possible? It may sound simple, but it's transformative. Shifting your mindset can flip a switch, opening the door to new opportunities.

## TRUTH 2

### Some Beliefs Hold You Back

Have you ever been around someone with a consistently negative attitude? They gripe about everything, assume the world is against them, and drain the energy of those around them. This is scarcity thinking. On the other hand, some people radiate warmth and encouragement. They respect others, focus on the good, and invest in others' success. This is abundance thinking—and it's energizing.

The distinction matters because every goal comes with obstacles. Scarcity thinkers see obstacles as dead ends, believing their abilities are fixed. They tend to avoid risks, quit easily, and fear failure. Abundance thinkers, however, approach challenges with persistence, creativity, and confidence. They believe they can improve and find solutions. These traits aren't fixed—they're learned mindsets, and they can be changed.

#### 3 KINDS OF LIMITING BELIEFS



ABOUT THE WORLD



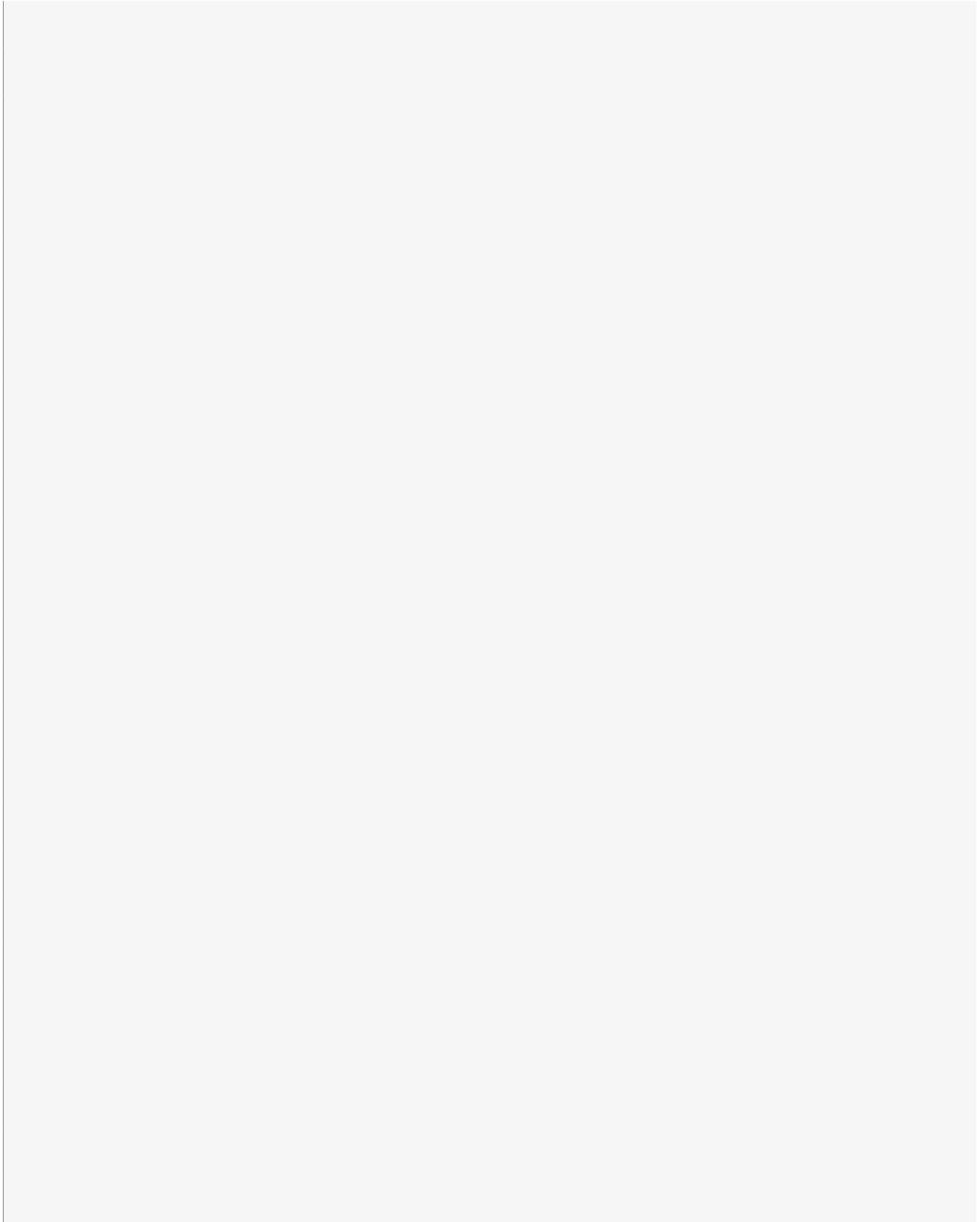
ABOUT OTHERS



ABOUT OURSELVES

Above all, don't lie to yourself.

FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY



It's helpful to think of three kinds of limiting beliefs.

1. **BELIEFS WE HOLD ABOUT THE WORLD.** Examples include, "I can't start a business; the market's terrible," or, "Politics don't matter; my vote won't count." These beliefs often stem from real experiences but rarely tell the whole truth.
2. **BELIEFS ABOUT OTHERS.** Common thoughts like, "They're too busy to help," or, "She's less experienced; what could she teach me?" reflect assumptions that limit collaboration and connection.
3. **BELIEFS ABOUT OURSELVES.** Thoughts like, "I'm a quitter," or, "I've never been good with money," become self-fulfilling prophecies, blocking progress before it starts.

Where do these limiting beliefs come from? Many limiting beliefs stem from past failures or repeated setbacks that condition us to expect the worst. Social influences, like the unrealistic comparisons fueled by social media or the negativity of scarcity thinkers in our circles, can also reinforce these beliefs.

In his book *Making Habits, Breaking Habits*, Jeremy Dean mentions three ways we can construct limiting beliefs.

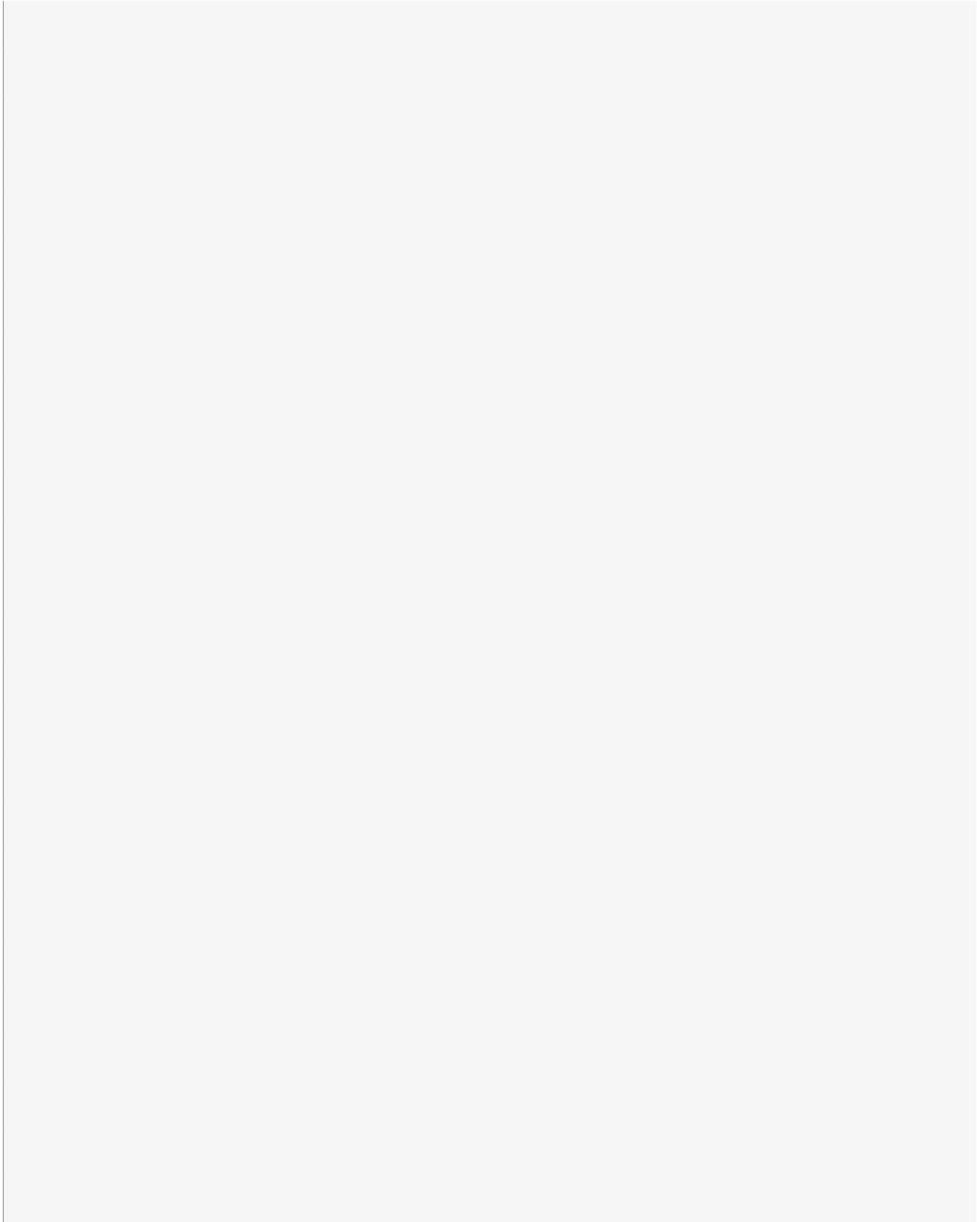
1. **BLACK-AND-WHITE THINKING.** Viewing success or failure as all-or-nothing.
2. **PERSONALIZING.** Blaming ourselves (or others) for random setbacks.
3. **CATASTROPHIZING.** Assuming the worst with little evidence.

And let's add a fourth to the list:

4. **UNIVERSALIZING.** Generalizing one bad experience across all situations.

Whatever you think can't be done, somebody will come along and do it.

THELONIOUS MONK



Our language reveals our limiting beliefs. Words like *never*, *always*, *can't*, or *won't* signal a restrictive mindset, as do "either/or" thinking, self-bullying, or doom-spiraling over challenges. If your vocabulary mirrors what marriage therapists advise against, it's time to reassess your mindset.

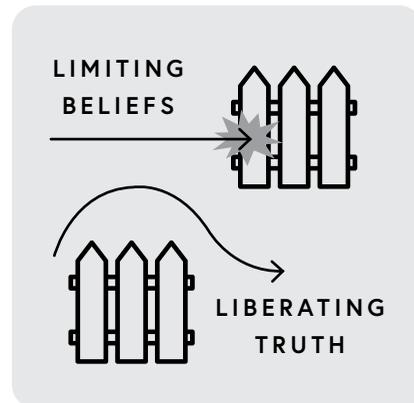
We create limiting beliefs to make sense of life's randomness. Stories—however negative—offer a sense of certainty and order. It's easier to organize life into a familiar storyline than to craft a different, more nuanced belief. Thankfully, we have the power to change our beliefs and unlock new possibilities for growth and success.

### TRUTH 3

## You Can Upgrade Your Beliefs

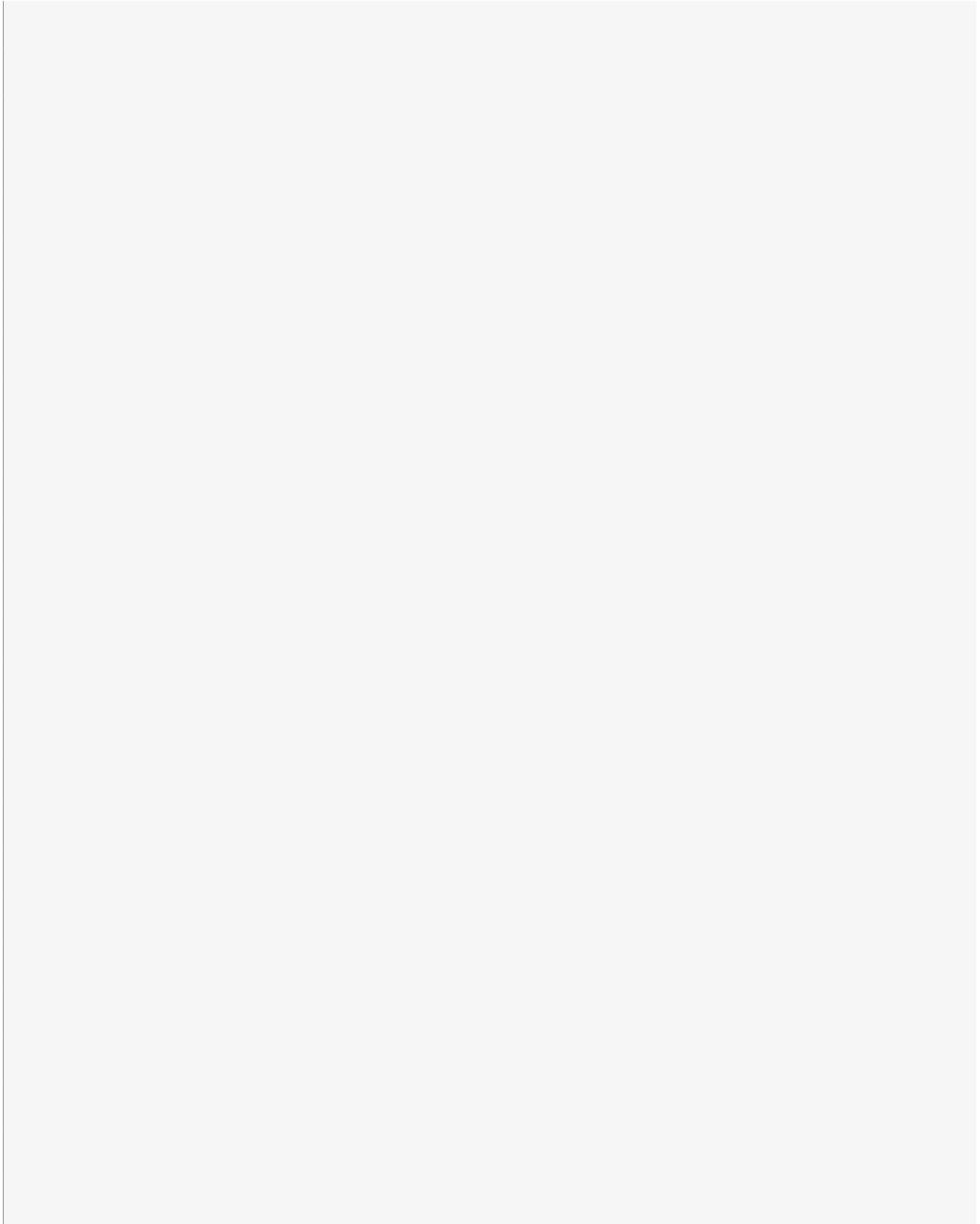
We all have had limiting beliefs like the following at one time or another.

"I don't have enough experience."  
 "I can't write."  
 "I always quit."  
 "I'm terrible with technology."  
 "I'm not good with money."  
 "I've hit the ceiling in my career."  
 "I'm not self-disciplined."  
 "I'm not creative."  
 "I'll never repair that relationship."  
 "I'm not smart enough."  
 "I always fail sooner or later."  
 "I'll never be able to bounce back from this failure."



Life is change. Growth is optional. Choose wisely.

KAREN KAISER



The list goes on, but we don't have to live under limiting beliefs—we can rewrite the story. Here's how:

- **STEP 1: IDENTIFY THE LIMITING BELIEF.** It's easy to mistake beliefs for facts because they seem so true to us. Facts are always objective and verifiable. Beliefs are frequently assumptions based on facts.

Remember to look for clues like black-and-white thinking, personalizing, catastrophizing, universalizing, or words like "always," "never," "can't," and "won't." These beliefs might involve the world, others, or yourself and stem from past experiences, media, or your social circle.

Even abundance thinkers find limiting beliefs when they dig. It's not a reason for shame—it's an exciting chance for breakthrough.

- **STEP 2: INTERROGATE THE LIMITING BELIEF.** Many of our beliefs are the product of conjecture and guesswork. When we look at our assumptions more objectively, they begin to fall apart.

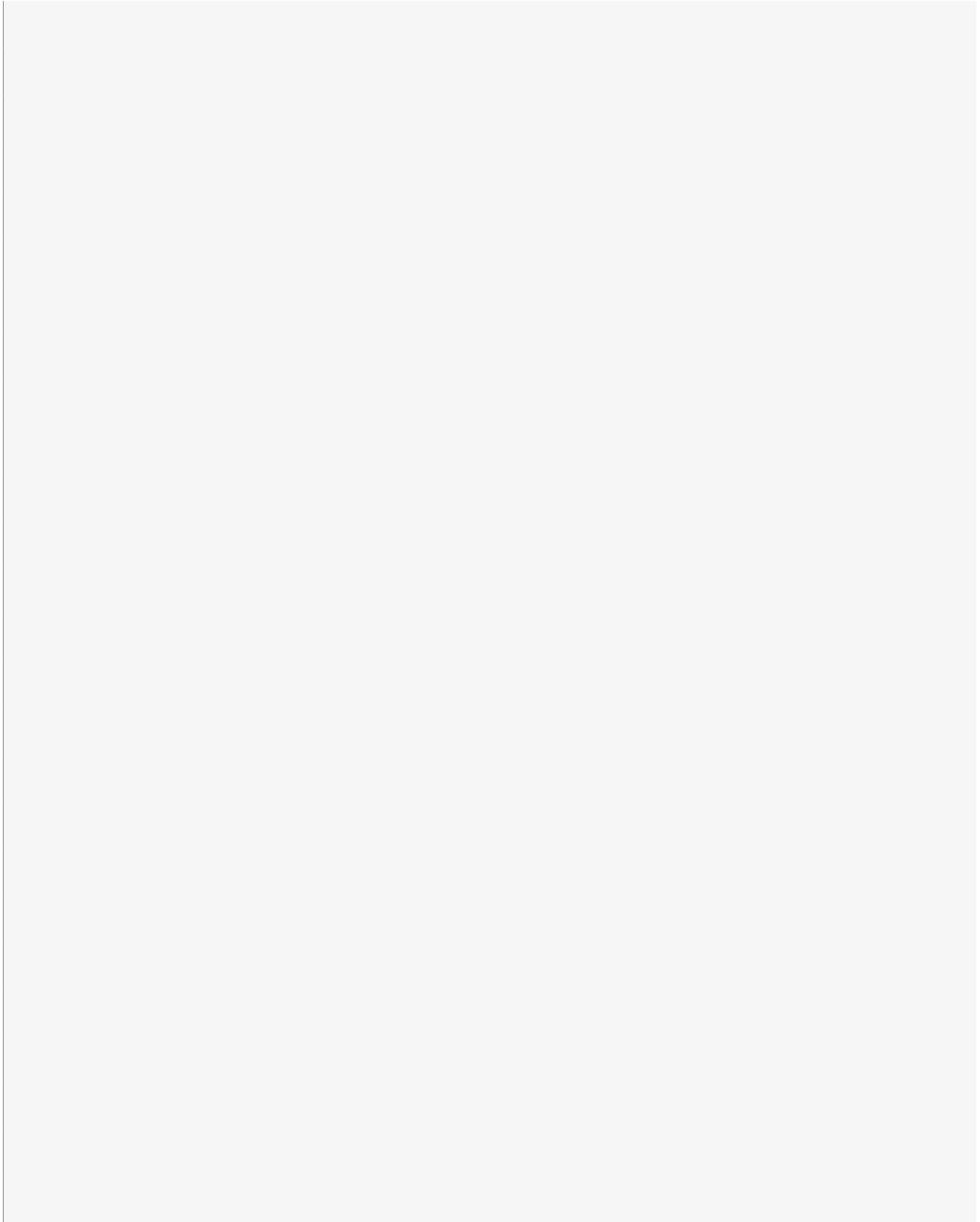
Here are a few questions worth asking. What is objectively true? In other words, what would an impartial observer say? What are the assumptions in your belief? Some beliefs are true within specific parameters, but we've started holding them as universal realities.

Finally, what do you want to be true? We're all biased. And sometimes, we cling to our limiting beliefs because they give us something—perhaps a sense of safety, certainty, control, or significance. Honesty is essential to set ourselves free.

- **STEP 3: IMAGINE A LIBERATING TRUTH.** If a limiting belief is simply false, you can reject it. But most limiting beliefs aren't simply false. There's enough truth in them that they're hard to deny outright.

You don't always control your circumstances, but you can always control your response.

JAMES MATTIS



But just because a limiting belief is partly true, that doesn't mean you have to settle for it. You can reframe it. Maybe you think, "Other people will always leave me behind." You might reframe it to, "I can weather relational loss and invest more deeply in the people who choose to stay."

Do you hear the difference? One perspective holds you back. The other launches you forward. If you're struggling to get unstuck, pull in some other minds. We can help each other find a better way forward.

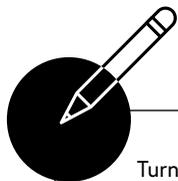
- **STEP 4: IMPLEMENT THE NEW BELIEF.** In order for a belief to stick, you have to act as if it's true. When you first try on a liberating truth, it might not quite fit. But as you walk in it, you'll grow into it.

You'll begin to establish a positive feedback loop. As you live as if the belief is true, you'll accrue evidence to support that belief. Your confidence will grow, and so will your results—because, remember, your beliefs shape your reality.

It might take some time. Don't get discouraged. Every time the old belief crops up, reject or reframe it and restate the liberating truth. The more you do so, the more you'll bring your experience into alignment with your expectations.

So, what are your limiting beliefs? The future is a blank canvas for you to design however you choose. Take control of your thoughts, and create the life you want!

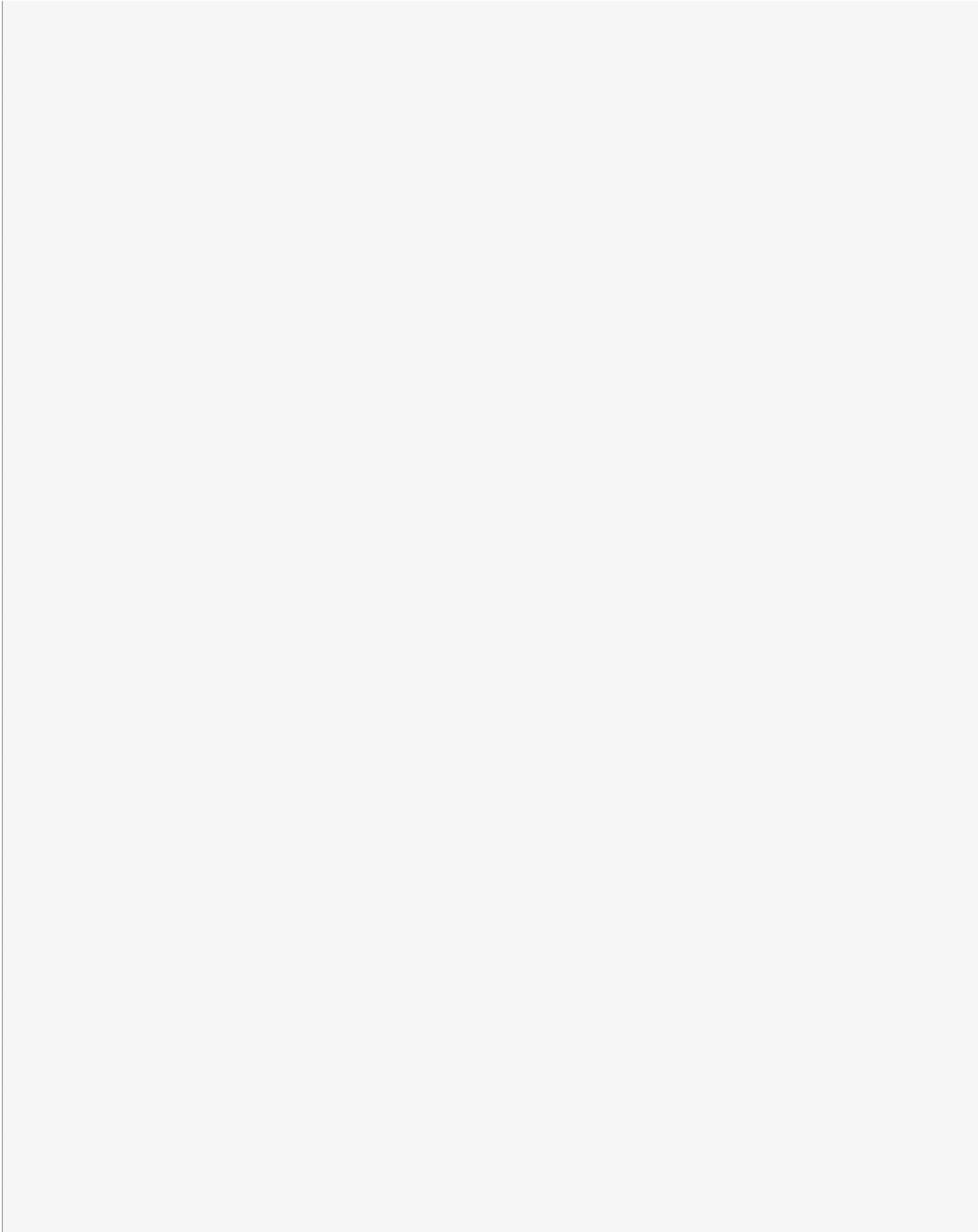
*The future is a blank canvas for you to design however you choose.*



Turn to **EXERCISE 2** on page 32, and use this process to work through some of your limiting beliefs.

Life's ups and downs provide windows of opportunity to determine your values and goals.

MARSHA SINETAR



**BONUS 1**

## 2 Common Limiting Beliefs

There are two limiting beliefs we hear all the time. The first is: *I don't have any power to change a given set of circumstances*. Maybe, but only rarely. We all have some degree of agency. According to Stanford University psychology professor Albert Bandura, that agency has four characteristics:

1. **INTENTION.** We can imagine a better reality than the one we're currently experiencing. And we can work with others and within our circumstances to achieve it.
1. **FORETHOUGHT.** By visualizing the future, we can govern our behavior in the present and give purpose and meaning to our actions.
1. **ACTION.** We have the ability to act on our plans, to stay motivated, and respond in the moment to remain on course.
1. **SELF-REFLECTION.** We not only act, we know we act. That means we can evaluate how we're doing, make adjustments, and even revise our plans.

We should think of these properties as superpowers. They're so common we rarely pause to think about them, but you can find the seed of every human accomplishment in this list. We can set goals, form plans, come up with workarounds, and adjust as necessary. Many goals only seem out of reach because we haven't started working on them yet.

The second common limiting belief is: *I don't have the resources I need to succeed*. That feeling is understandable, but let's be clear about this upfront. Resources are never a prerequisite for success. In fact, if you've already got everything you need to achieve your goal, you're aiming too low.

The truth is that constraints can trigger a cascade of unforeseen rewards. A supposed lack of resources not only spurs resourcefulness, it also builds resilience and confidence. The more times we overcome difficulties, the more capable we are of overcoming whatever comes next.

Constraints don't have to be your enemy. They are like the boundary lines in a game. Think football or basketball. The sidelines don't limit the game, they make the game possible in the first place. And it's within those constraints that games are won.

**BONUS 2****Scarcity vs.  
Abundance****SCARCITY THINKERS ARE**

Risk Averse  
 Complacent  
 Stagnant  
 Self-Limiting  
 Closed  
 Prone to Quit  
 Defeated  
 Cynical  
 Fatalistic  
 Stingy  
 Tightfisted  
 Self-Protective  
 Defensive  
 Fixed

**ABUNDANCE THINKERS ARE**

Adventurous  
 Ambitious  
 Growth-Minded  
 Resourceful  
 Open  
 Persistent  
 Undefeated  
 Hopeful Realists  
 Optimistic  
 Generous  
 Openhanded  
 Openhearted  
 Open to Connection  
 Changeable

## EXERCISE 2

# *Limiting Beliefs vs.* Liberating Truths

## INSTRUCTIONS AND EXAMPLE

On the following page, list your top three limiting beliefs about the world, others, and yourself. Do a little soul searching here.

Consider the nine life domains: body, mind, spirit, love, family, community, money, work and hobbies.

Consider what limiting beliefs have maybe hindered you from fulfilling your potential here in the past.

Pay close attention to any black-and-white thinking, personalizing, catastrophizing, or universalizing. And notice how your language signals limiting beliefs.

Don't beat yourself up. Just recognize those beliefs for what they are.

Once you've identified your limiting beliefs, replace each limiting belief with a liberating truth. We're talking about rejecting, reframing, and revising here. Look at your limiting beliefs and ask yourself: what's a more useful, resilient, or empowering way to think about the world, others, or myself?

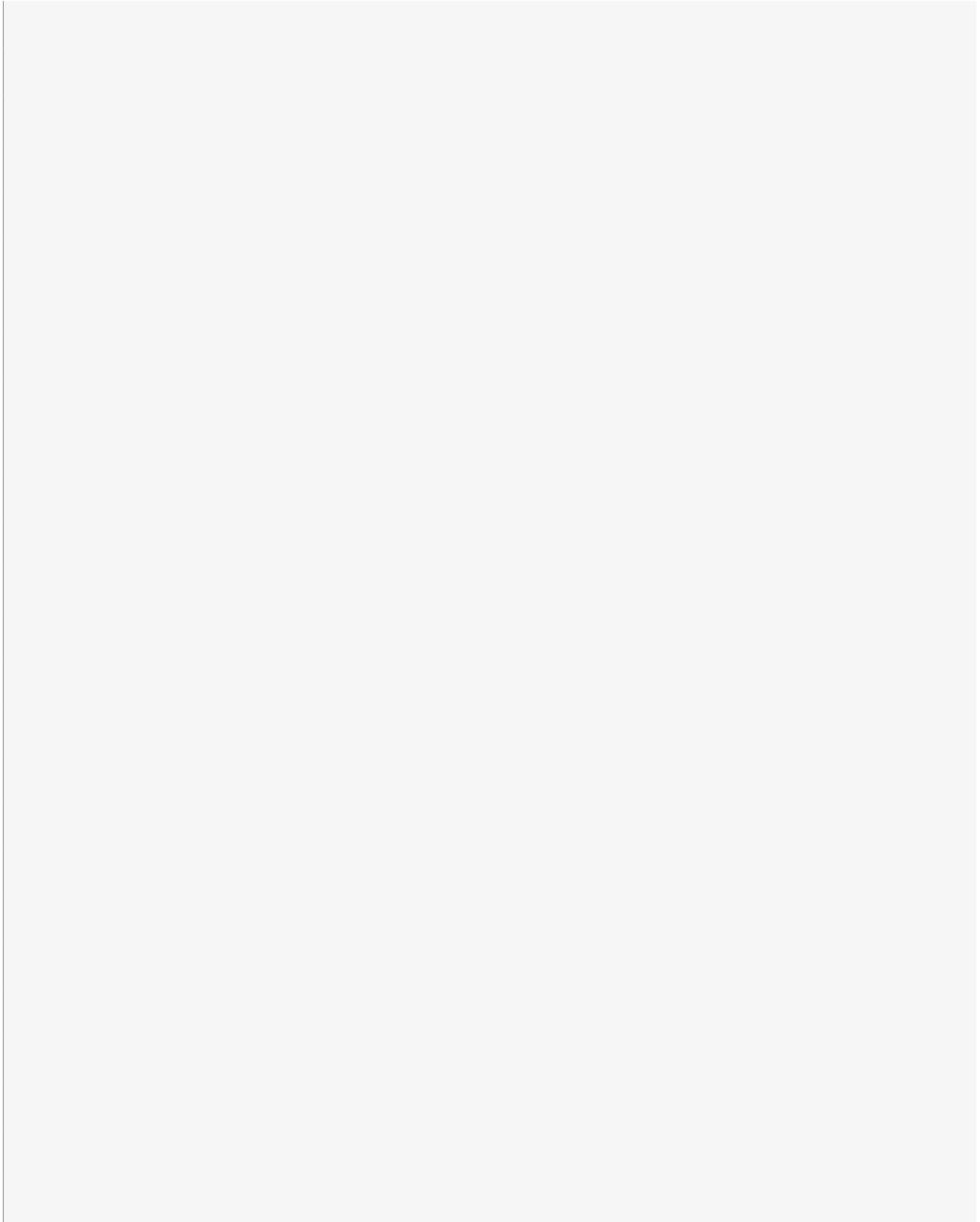
	LIMITING BELIEFS	LIBERATING TRUTHS
WORLD	We can't launch a new product in this <i>economy</i> . There's too much risk!	We can take steps to validate our <i>idea</i> and mitigate the risk.
OTHERS	Our company's culture makes it impossible to take time off.	I can take steps to disconnect wisely— and I'll return to work more energized.
SELF	My schedule makes it impossible for me to get regular <i>exercise</i> .	There is enough time to accomplish what matters most to me.

## LIMITING BELIEFS VS. LIBERATING TRUTHS

	LIMITING BELIEFS	LIBERATING TRUTHS
WORLD		
OTHERS		
SELF		

I attribute my success to this: I never gave or took an excuse.

FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE



## LESSON 2

# Complete the Past

---

After limiting beliefs, the past is the most common barrier we encounter. Some of us drag around the past like a trailer full of broken furniture. We can't really consider what's next because we're too tied up in what's already happened. We have to be willing to face our past in order to build a stronger future.

Nobel-winning psychologist Daniel Kahneman and Dale Miller put it this way: "Reasoning flows not only forward, but also backward, from the experience to what it reminds us of or makes us think about." They call this "the power of backward thinking." And in this lesson we're going to harness that power for ourselves.

The US Army has a powerful backward-thinking process we can use for our own purposes. It's called the After Action Review, and it was first developed in 1981. America's armed forces have been using it ever since to improve performance and get better at what they do.

Marilyn Darling, Charles Parry, and Joseph Moore studied the After Action Review process

---

*We have to be willing to face our past in order to build a stronger future.*

---

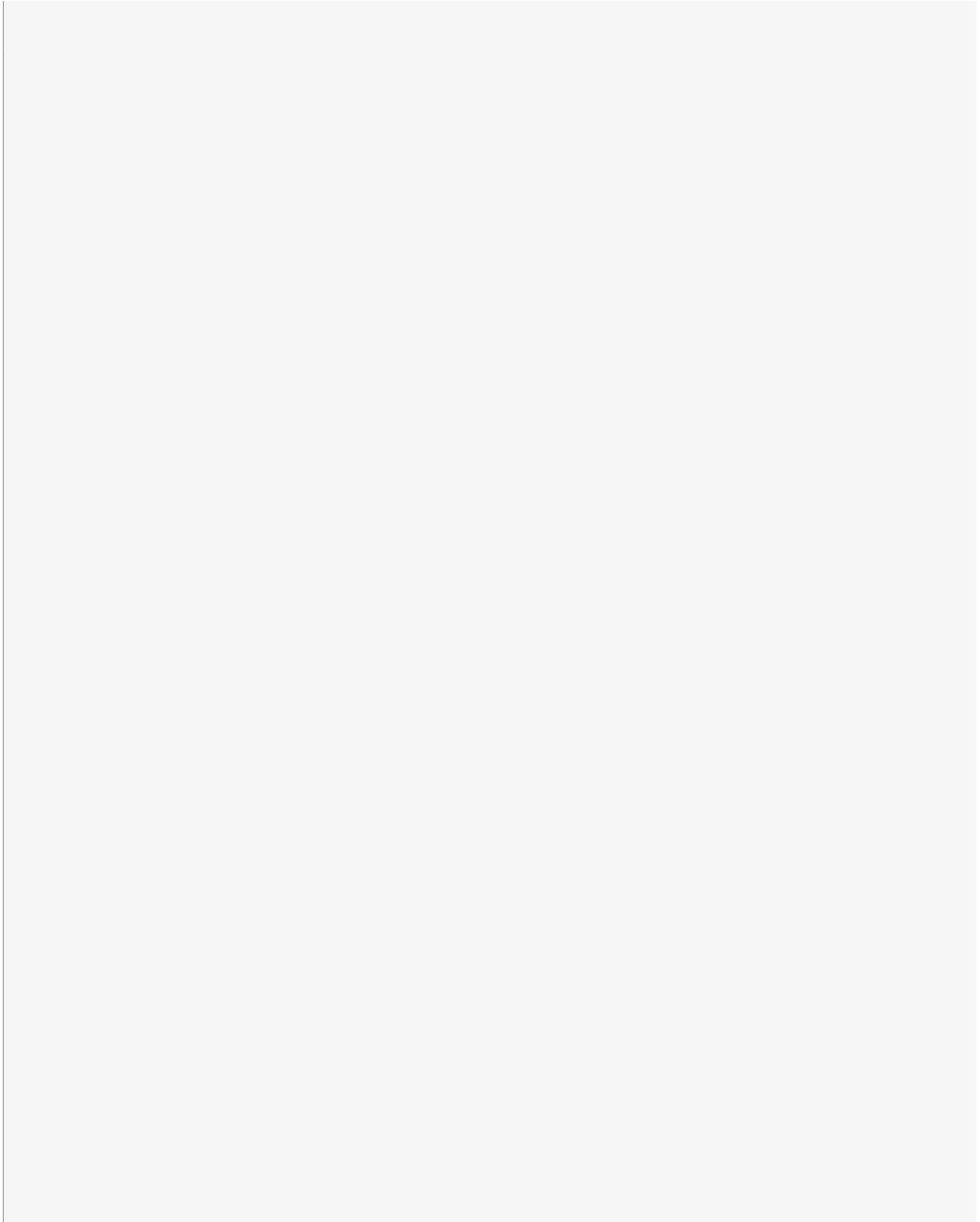
### *Note*

*The process in this lesson is designed to help you deal with routine setbacks and frustrations. It can even help you deal with a whole stack of them. But it's not designed to help you deal with serious trauma. If you need to bring in outside resources like a therapist, please do. For some of us, processing our disappointments and setbacks can suffice. But this can be tough. A lot of past students report feeling strong emotions during this exercise. Those feelings are real, and you shouldn't be alarmed or put off if they come to you. After all, you're dealing with life as it happened, not as you wished it would have happened. You might unearth real and serious disappointments. And you might find it helpful to utilize help outside of what this course can offer.*

---

Instead of letting your hardships and failures discourage or exhaust you, let them inspire you. Let them make you even hungrier to succeed.

MICHELLE OBAMA



and published their findings in the *Harvard Business Review*. They give the example of a training battle in which one team completely outmaneuvered and defeated the more experienced team that was supposed to be training them. To learn from the defeat, the trainers conducted an After Action Review. They studied what went wrong, what went right, and how to adjust their approach in the future. In fact, the losing team's commander called it "a good rehearsal" for battlefield engagements.

Why is this important? Because completing the past is all about moving into the future. As the authors of the *HBR* study said, an After Action Review is "a living, pervasive process that explicitly connects past experience with future action."

The goal of After Action Reviews is to understand what happened, why it happened, and how to improve. Lots of businesses use this process, and we can use it too. This kind of "backward thinking" will put you in the right frame of mind as you get ready to design your future and experience your best year ever.

The After Action Review process includes four principal steps.

#### STEP 1

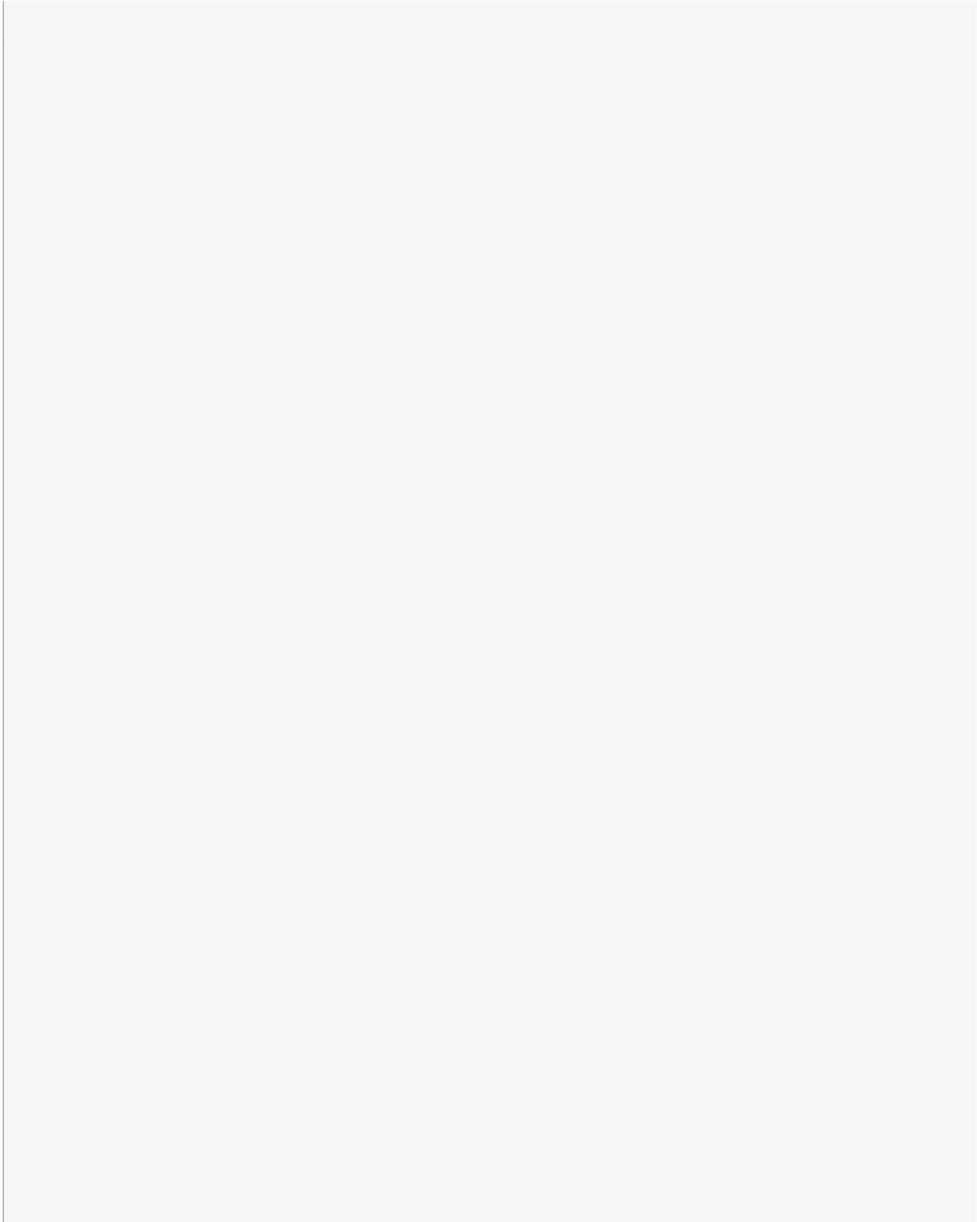
### State What You Wanted to Happen

This is pretty straightforward. Think of it as your battle plan or the object of the mission. This could be your list of goals from the prior year. It could also be something less definite. Maybe it's just an unstated hope or an aspiration.

Start by asking yourself *how you saw the year going: What were your plans, your dreams, and your concrete goals—if any?* Don't focus on just one or two areas. Remember, our lives consist of nine interrelated domains. It's important to get clear on what you wanted to happen across all or at least most of them.

My new rule: whenever things go wrong, wait and see what better thing is coming.

SCOTT CAIRNS



## STEP 2

## Acknowledge What Actually Happened

Take an honest look at the past year and examine where things went right and where they went wrong. There may be distance between your desire and your current reality. Some of your goals, perhaps many of them, remain unfulfilled. So ask yourself: *What disappointments did you experience this past year?*

Because these memories can be painful, it's tempting to dismiss or ignore them. But you don't want to leave these things hanging in the air or push them behind you like they don't matter. Both will prevent you from taking meaningful action in the present.

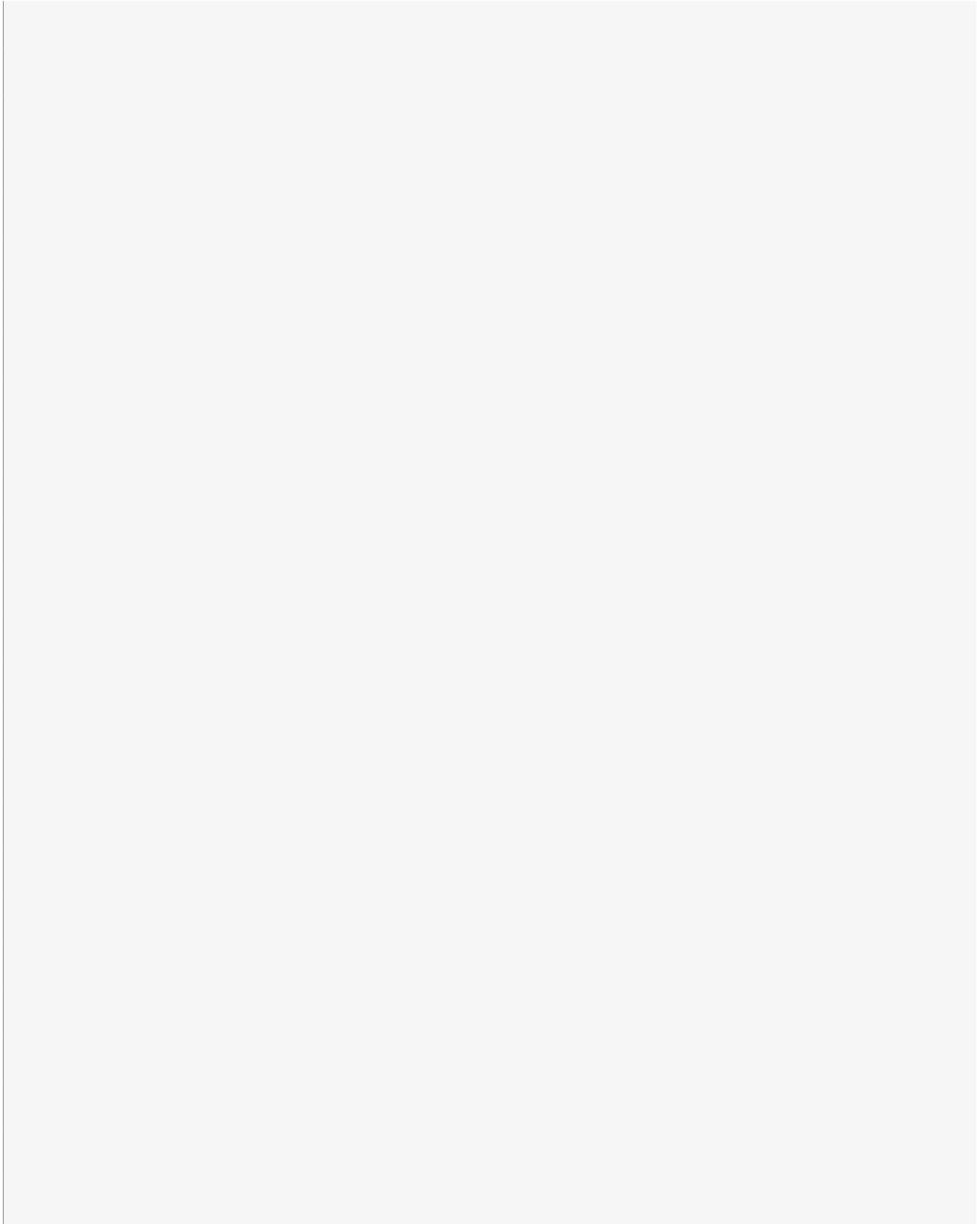
Another question to ask yourself is: *What did you feel you should have been acknowledged for but weren't?* There's real emotional power in simply admitting what we wished others would have noticed and commended in our actions but didn't. Along with that, ask yourself: *What did you accomplish this year that you were most proud of?*

It's also helpful to ask: *How do the events of the past year—good or bad—ultimately serve for your benefit?* You're not trying to ignore pain, but to tell a more empowering story. When we view the past negatively, we run the risk of letting the past shape the future. As Benjamin Hardy warns, our goals can then "become short term and avoidance-oriented, where you try escaping the pain of the present." Finding the meaning in our pain sets us free from spending our days trying to flee it.

Finally, ask yourself: *What do I regret?* Believe it or not, regret can be a good thing. While painful, it offers valuable insights if we're willing to reflect on it. Psychologist Janet Landman highlights three benefits of regret:

Don't let mistakes become distractions.

CARLA HARRIS



1. **Instruction:** Regret provides information, helping us learn from missteps to avoid repeating them.
2. **Motivation to Change:** Regret not only signals something is wrong but also inspires action to make things right.
3. **Integrity:** It acts as a moral compass, guiding us back to the right path when we've strayed.

Even better, regret is a powerful indicator of opportunity. Researchers Neal Roese and Amy Summerville from the University of Illinois studied people's biggest life regrets—around education, career, romance, parenting, self-improvement, and leisure. They found that regret is strongest where there's a clear chance to make improvements.

*Regret is a powerful indicator of opportunity.*

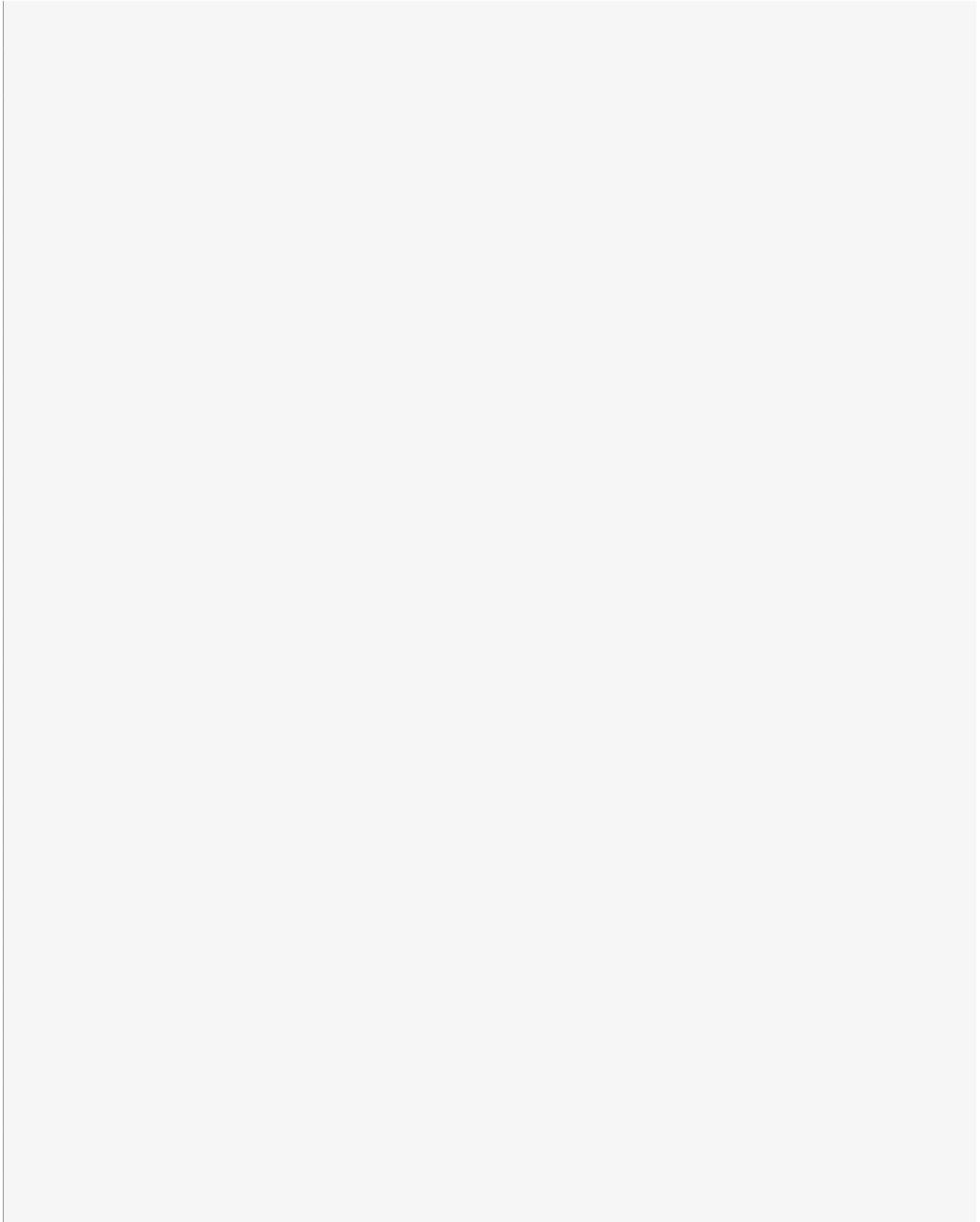
This "Opportunity Principle" flips our typical view of regret. Instead of being a backward-looking source of pain, regret points forward, highlighting areas for growth. Roese explained, "It shows the value of experiencing regret deeply, listening to what these emotions tell you, what they reveal about your deepest wishes, then acting quickly on these newfound insights."

Our minds naturally ease the burden of regrets we can't change, but lingering regret often signals a chance to improve—whether it's returning to school, changing careers, or mending relationships.

When reflecting on your regrets, identify recurring themes and note what you've learned. These insights can serve as tools to guide your future decisions.

Failure is your responsibility. Share the credit, take the blame, and quietly find out and fix things that went wrong.

COLIN POWELL



## STEP 3

## Learn From The Experience

*What were the major life lessons you learned this past year?* Unless we learn from our experiences, we can't grow. If you have trouble identifying your key lessons from the year, one way to identify them is to ask: *What was missing from my success?* Maybe it was strategic planning—you wish you had done more of that in your business. Maybe you wish you had saved more money, spent more time with your spouse, played more with your kids, taken a sabbatical, or read more books.

Another good question to ask is: *Did I have any limiting beliefs that blocked my progress or got me off track?* At this point, you're prepared to address those. Answering these questions is an effective way to learn what went wrong and what it would take for things to go right in the future.

To retain these lessons, you'll want to distill your discoveries into short, memorable statements. This transforms your takeaways into accessible wisdom sayings to guide your path into the future. Here's an example: "Don't overthink the outcome; just do the next right thing." Or, "I can do anything I want. I just can't do everything I want." You get the idea. Distill the lessons from your experiences so you don't lose them and so they can serve as tools moving forward.

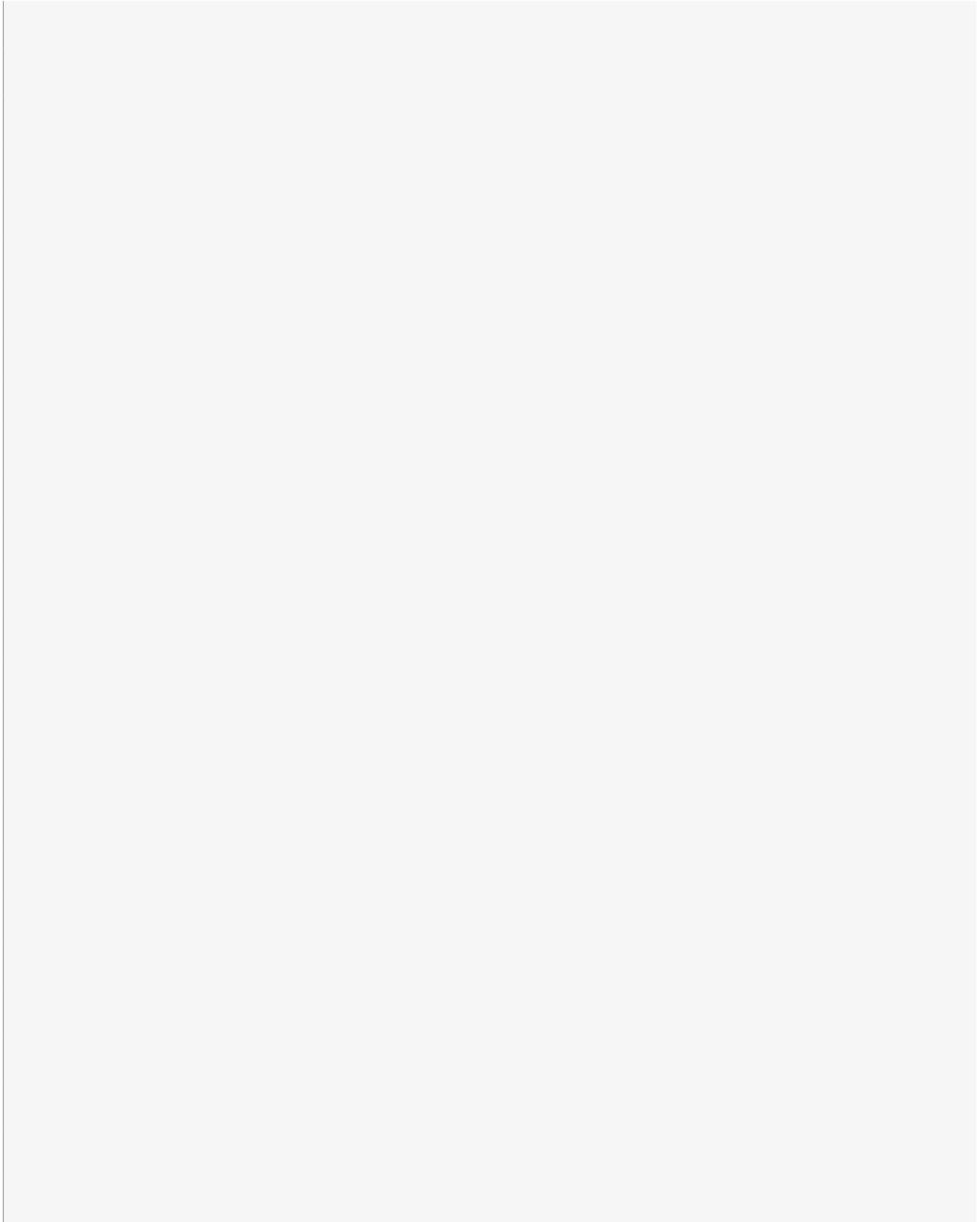
## STEP 4

## Adjust Your Behavior

This is where a lot of people go wrong. Why? They don't follow through and change what needs to be changed. If something in your beliefs and behaviors contributed to the gap between what you wanted to happen and what actually happened, something has to change. In fact, that gap will only widen and worsen unless you pivot.

When you are doing something no one has done before, there will be missteps.

WANDA WALLACE



That's why we must ask a final question: *What will you change going forward?*

It's not enough to acknowledge the gap. It's not even enough to learn from the experience. If you don't change your beliefs and how you act on them, you'll actually end up in a worse spot than when you started. Thinking backward can help us learn from the past and discern positive behaviors to apply toward building a better future.

Let's review. Completing the past makes it possible to walk unhindered into the future. We get there by leveraging the After Action Review. When you're confronted by the gap between what you wanted to happen and what actually happened, don't get stuck in shame. Approach regret not as a roadblock, but as a road sign that points the way toward opportunity. Then, the lessons from your past can help you design a brighter future.

### ROADBLOCK



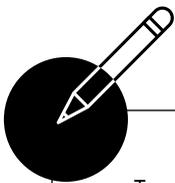
HINDERS PROGRESS

VS

### ROAD SIGN



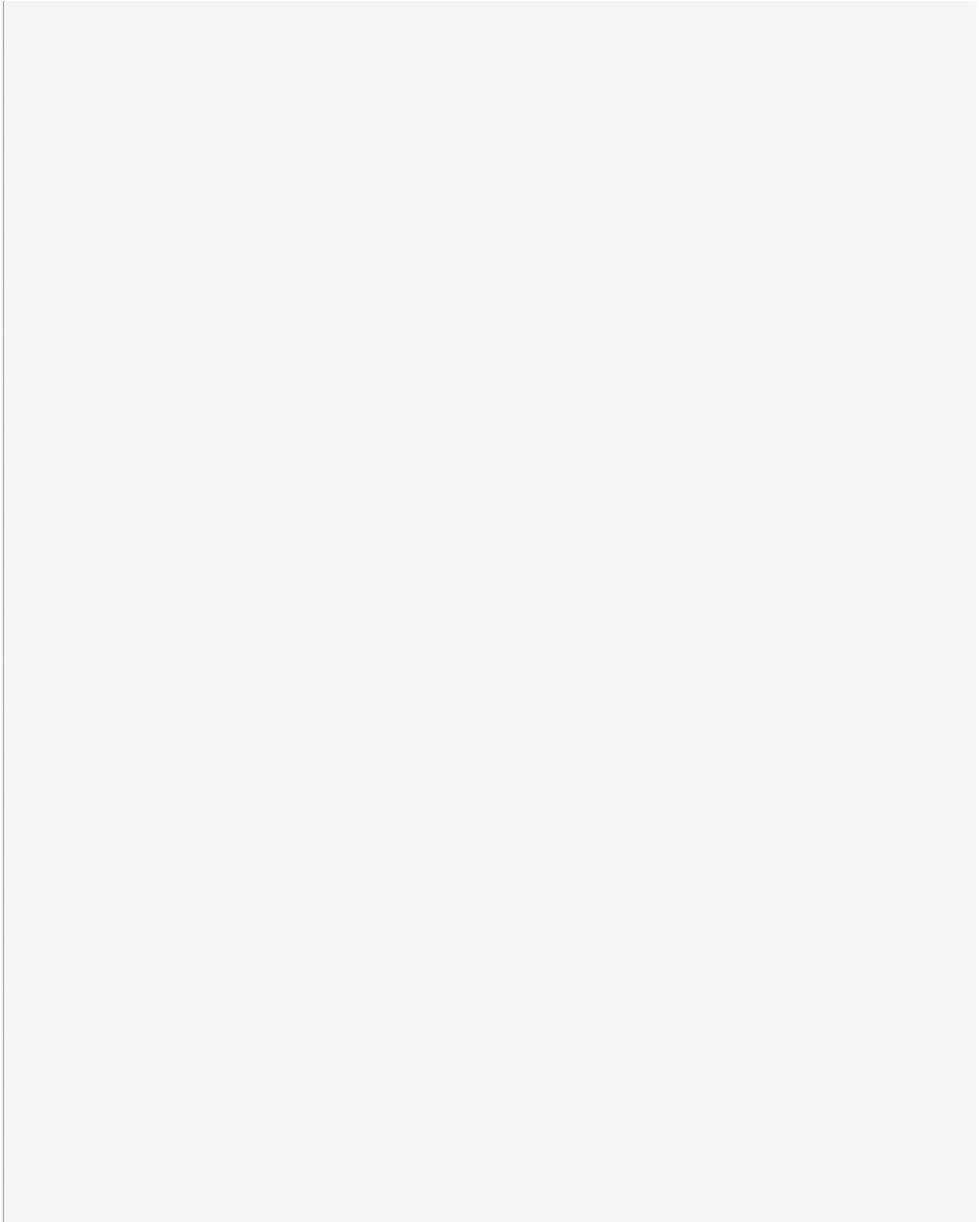
SHOWS NEW OPPORTUNITY



Turn to **EXERCISE 3** on page 50. It's time to do an After Action Review for yourself.

Life is all about risk and reward. Better to have struggled, to have tried, than to not have seized an opportunity at all.

TOMMY CALDWELL



**BONUS 3**

## The Gratitude Advantage

One more key component of completing the past is gratitude. Gratitude is a powerful catalyst for creating your best year ever.

A study of 383 high-school students published by Cambridge University Press found that gratitude is linked to higher academic achievement and greater autonomous motivation. Previous theories suggested that gratitude might lead to complacency, causing people to feel content and stop striving. However, the research shows that gratitude actually enhances goal-striving, not the opposite.

This happens because gratitude builds resilience—the ability to overcome obstacles. We call this the Gratitude Advantage. First, gratitude keeps us hopeful. When our circumstances improve, we notice the gap between where we were and where we are now, which gives us something to be thankful for.

Second, gratitude reminds us of our agency. It shows us we have the power to act and make changes in our lives. While gratitude acknowledges what others have done for us, it's our agency that allows us to receive and act on those contributions. Gratitude also boosts patience. It helps us stick with our goals, even when progress is slow or obstacles arise, instead of cutting corners or quitting.

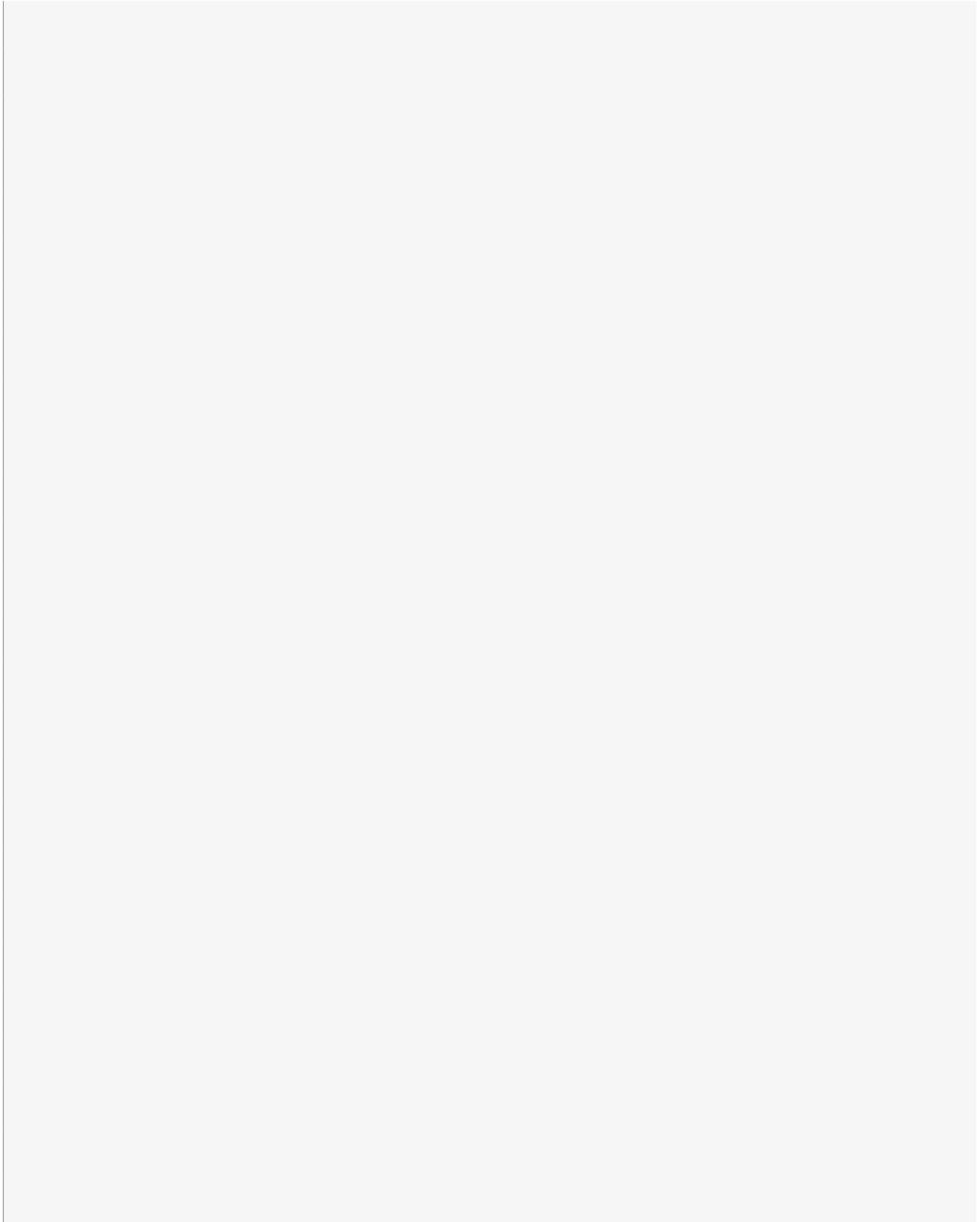
Finally, gratitude shifts us into a mindset of abundance. It makes us more resourceful, creative, generous, and optimistic. When we focus on scarcity, we become reactionary, closed-minded, and pessimistic. No matter how difficult this past year has been, we all have blessings, gifts, and assets in our lives. Although we may lack many things, we still have so much. When we view the past through a lens of gratitude, we realize our present is richer than we may have imagined.

Gratitude can be difficult to practice, especially when life feels routine. Psychologist Timothy Wilson suggests the "George Bailey technique," inspired by the movie *It's a Wonderful Life*. In the film, George Bailey realizes his value after seeing what the world would be like without him. Wilson's technique asks people to imagine life without their most important possessions or experiences, such as their home, job, or loved ones. This exercise often sparks a renewed sense of appreciation.

We don't have to wait for something to be gone to appreciate it. By imagining the absence of what we cherish, we can gain a deeper sense of gratitude. This practice helps us value the present and make the most of the life we've been given. Though it can be challenging, especially after setbacks or losses, gratitude is a vital skill. It's the key to overcoming challenges and embracing the opportunities ahead.

Forget about trying to compete with someone else. Create your own pathway.

HERBIE HANCOCK



**EXERCISE 3**

# After Action Review

**INSTRUCTIONS AND EXAMPLE**

Get your pen and work through all the questions in the order they're presented. Answer each one as honestly as you can, writing down whatever comes to mind first. Don't overthink or self-edit. Keep it raw and unfiltered. Don't rush—take your time to really process the past, including any regrets. This is crucial because in the next lesson, we turn the corner.

As part of this exercise, make a list of ten things you're grateful for right now to help you enter the next three lessons with an abundance mindset.

## COMPLETE YOUR OWN AFTER ACTION REVIEW

To conduct your own After Action Review, work through the four steps: first, state what you wanted to happen; second, acknowledge what actually did happen; third, learn from the experience; and finally, adjust your behavior. It's effective to work through these steps by answering the ten questions from the lesson.

### 1. What were my plans, my dreams, and my concrete goals—if any? Did you have any wins?

*I thought this would be a great a year, and in large part it was. But nothing ever goes entirely according to plan.*

### 2. What disappointments did I experience this past year?

*I wanted to spend a lot of time with my family. I wanted to get promoted at work and to hire an executive assistant. We planned on taking two separate, one-week vacations as a family. I think I also expected to be able to have more control of my schedule at work so I could make some of these things happen.*

### 3. What did I feel I should have been acknowledged for but wasn't?

*I didn't gain as much autonomy as I desired at work, so we only got to take one vacation as a family over the summer. Working toward a promotion ended up requiring an extra project that I didn't expect. My work-life balance continued to be out of whack. I did get promoted, but haven't been approved for an assistant yet.*

## COMPLETE YOUR OWN AFTER ACTION REVIEW

*To conduct your own After Action Review, work through the four steps: first, state what you wanted to happen; second, acknowledge what actually did happen; third, learn from the experience; and finally, adjust your behavior. It's effective to work through these steps by answering the ten questions from the lesson.*

What were my plans, my dreams, my concrete goals, if I had any?

What disappointments did I experience this past year?

What did I feel I should have been acknowledged for but wasn't?

What did I accomplish this past year that I was most proud of?

How do the events of the past year—good or bad—ultimately serve for my benefit?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

What do I regret?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

What were the major life lessons I learned this past year?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

What was missing from my success?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

Did I have any limiting beliefs that blocked my progress or got me off track?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

What will I change going forward?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## LIST TEN THINGS YOU'RE GRATEFUL FOR

*Put the Gratitude Advantage to work for you by writing down ten reasons for thankfulness in your life today. For starters, what went well in the last year?*

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

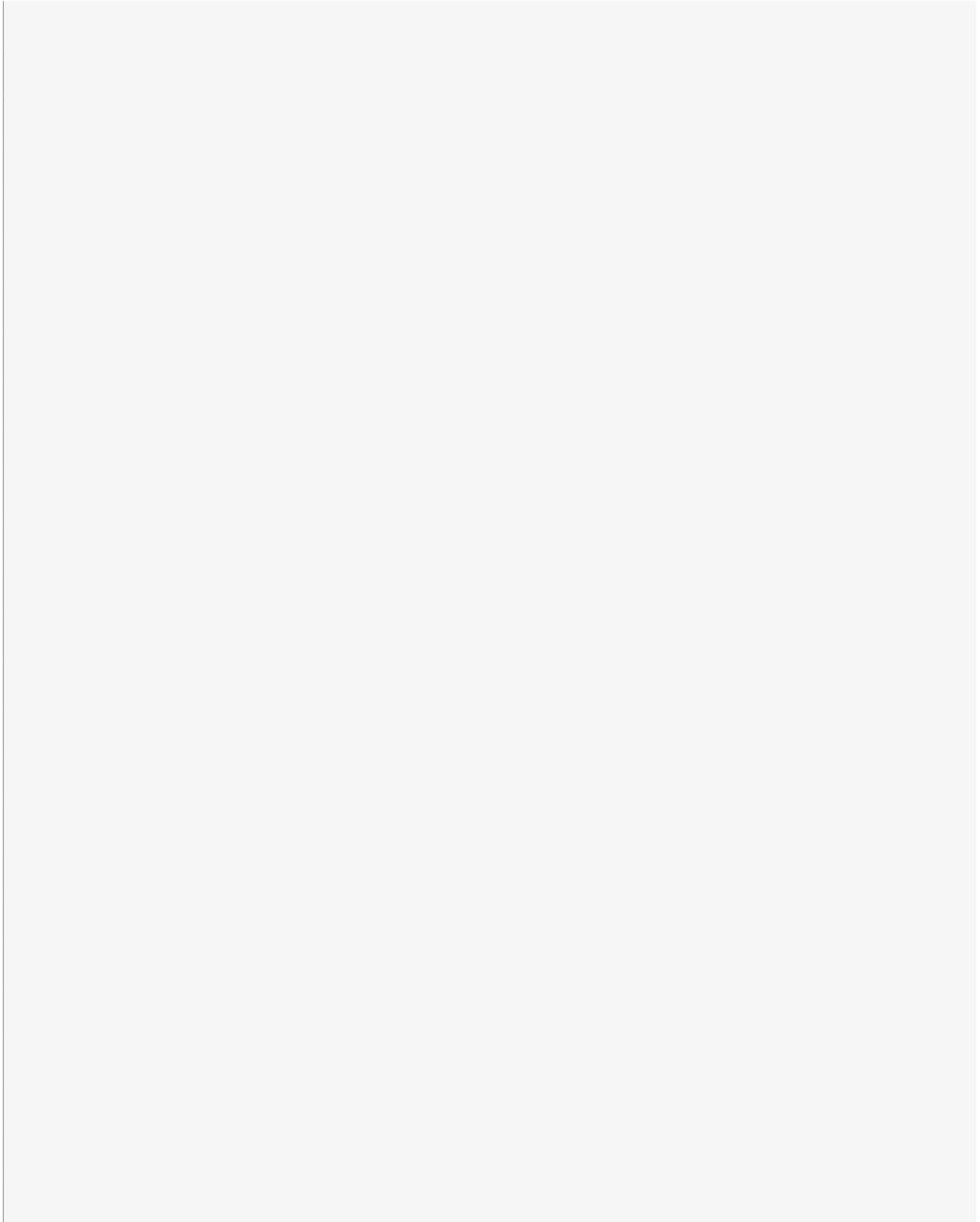
8

9

10

I learned to always take on things I'd never done before. Growth and comfort do not coexist.

GINNI ROMETTY



## LESSON 3

# Design Your Future, *Part 1*

---

Most people set New Year's Resolutions from a place of shame. They focus on what their lives "should" look like. They berate themselves for how they "should" spend their time or money, how they "should" dress or eat, what their relationships or bodies "should" look like—and the list can be never-ending.

Shame, admittedly, can be good at initiating change. Imagine that we are both horse and rider. When we shame ourselves, we're using the whip. It might get us moving. But shame can't sustain our best efforts. In fact, when shame burns itself (and us) out, it leaves us convinced we can't change—resigned to the very realities we were trying to escape.

Think about things you once wanted for your life but have now convinced yourself you "don't care about" anymore. Did shame drive you to resignation and passivity?

If shame doesn't work, what does? The answer is desire. When we want something deeply—at the core of who we are—we're far more likely to commit ourselves to the work necessary to achieve it.

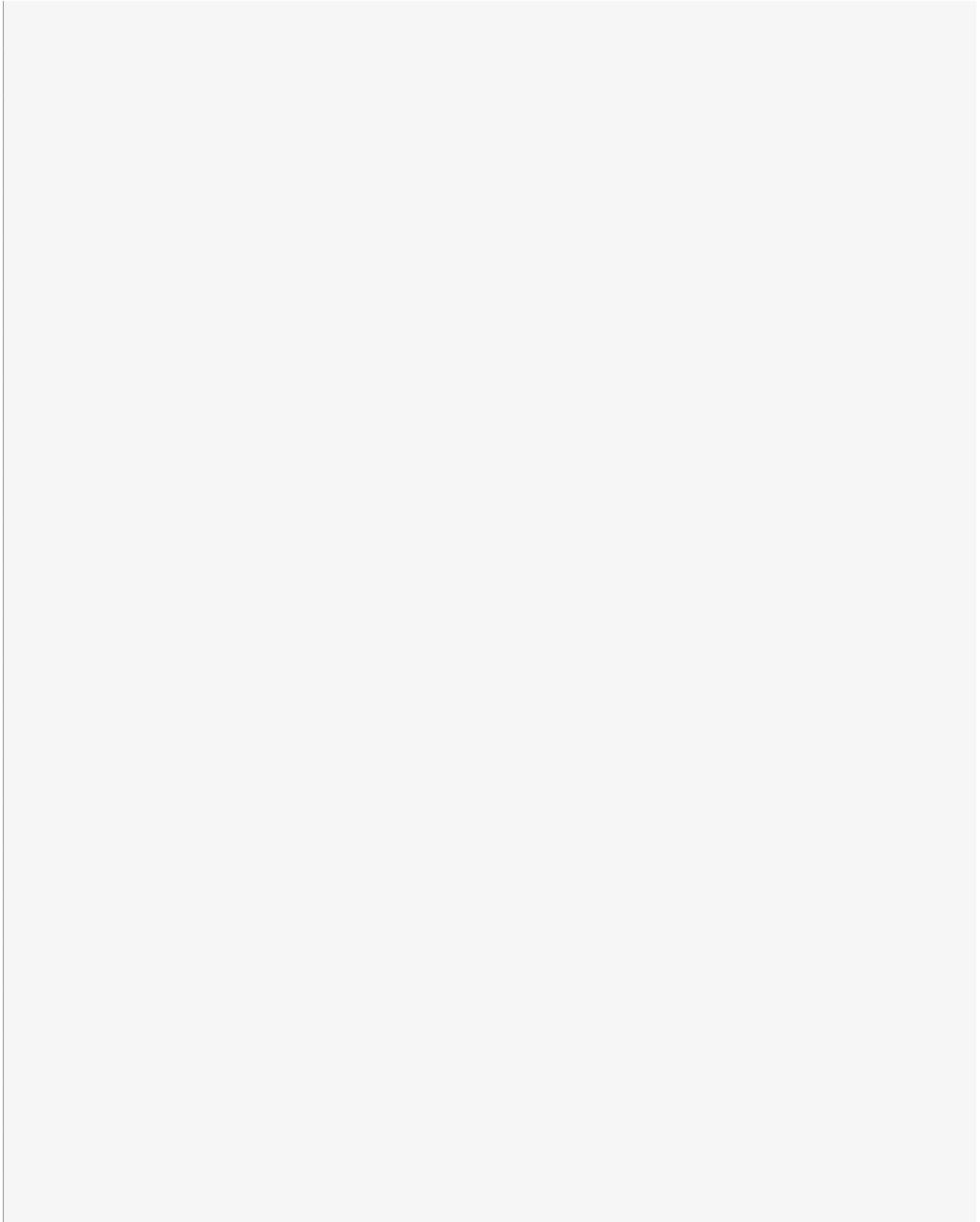
The desires that serve us best, that provide access to what researchers call intrinsic motivation, are closely aligned with what we value most. The desire to:

- ✓ Access greater opportunities
- ✓ Feel at ease with ourselves
- ✓ Experience joy and fulfillment

*The desires that serve us best are closely aligned with what we value most.*

There's nothing more important than knowing where you're going.

J. J. ABRAMS



- ✓ Break free from harmful patterns and experience peace
- ✓ Matter and contribute to our communities
- ✓ Connect more deeply with the people we love
- ✓ Realize our potential
- ✓ Cultivate inner strength and resilience
- ✓ Live authentically and in alignment with our true selves

When it comes to empowering transformation, not just any desire will do. In fact, some lower desires clash with what we know will lead to the future we want. For example, you might want to lash out in self-defense *and* lovingly navigate conflict. You might want to skip the workout *and* enjoy greater vitality and energy. You might want to give up on a career change *and* find satisfaction by transitioning to more meaningful work.

The desires working against our growth often feel stronger in the moment. But the desires rooted in who we aspire to become have deeper roots, giving us access to the stores of energy we need to sustain meaningful change. We'll dive deeper into this in **Lesson 5: Find Your Why**.

For now, let's start by simply noticing what we want.

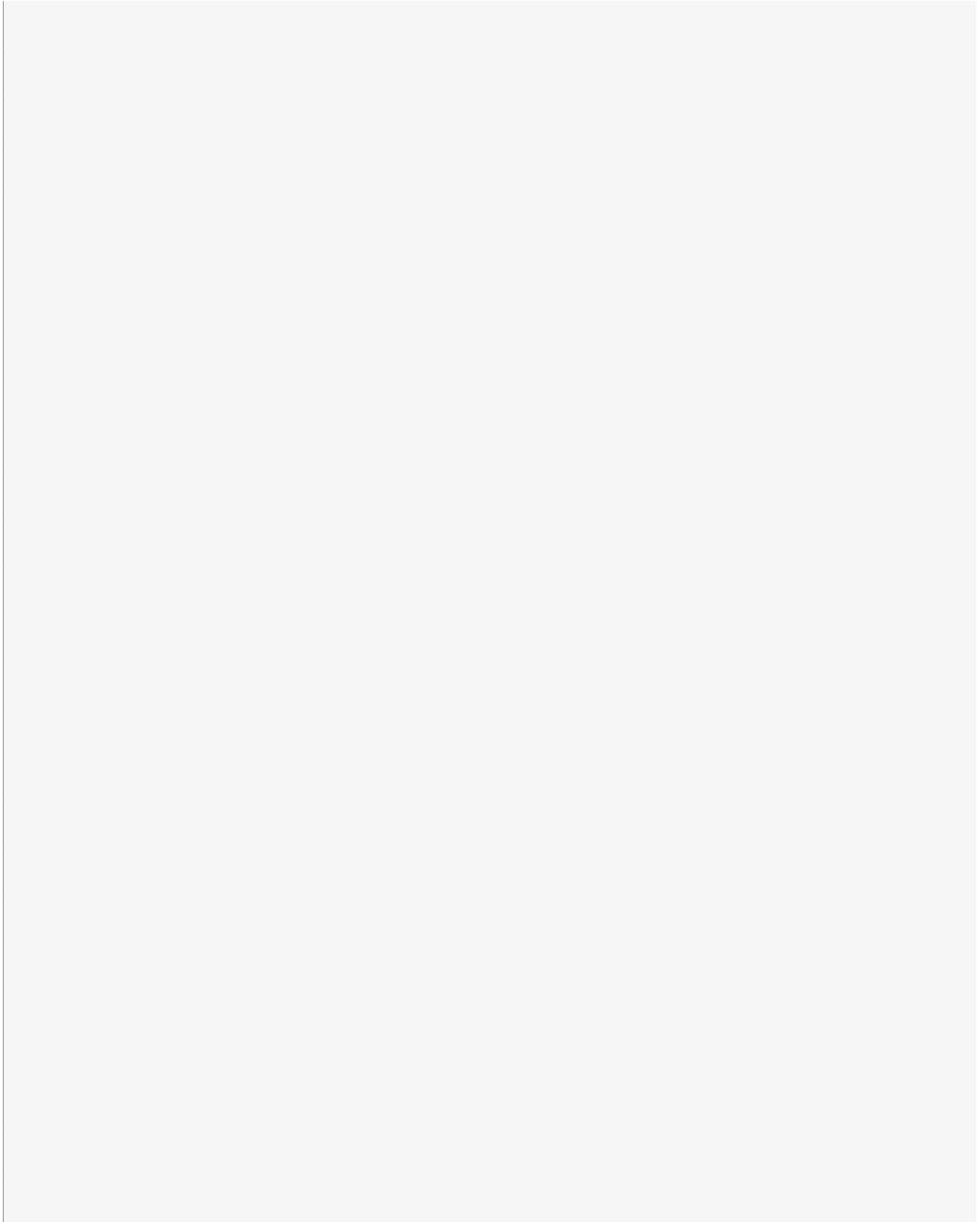
## → What Do You Want, Anyway?

Some areas of life make it easier to notice what you want. You know exactly the kind of relief you crave or the strength you desire to build upon. Other areas might feel murky, leaving you resigned, confused, or lost.

Still, it's essential to build a balanced vision for a satisfying life, one that includes all nine life domains. This doesn't mean you'll devote equal attention to every domain—or even set goals in all nine. It does mean paying attention to what you desire in each and letting those desires guide your choices.

Life is either a daring adventure or nothing.

HELEN KELLER



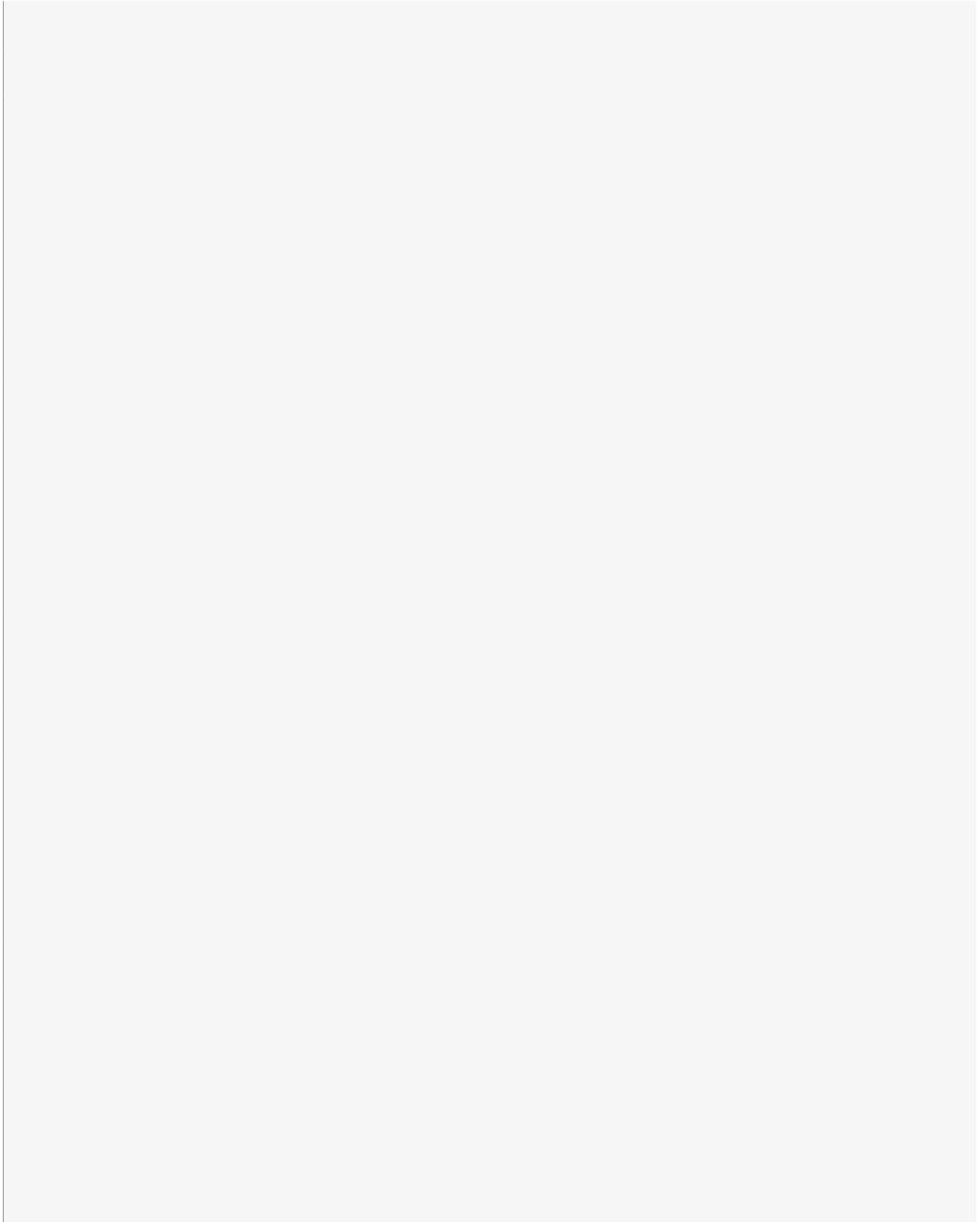
We can think of these desires as aspirational. Here are some examples of aspirations for each of the domains:

 <b>BODY</b>	 <b>LOVE</b>	 <b>MONEY</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build strength and energy.</li> <li>Eat healthier meals.</li> <li>Sleep better.</li> <li>Move more every day.</li> <li>Cook at home more.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Go on more dates.</li> <li>Work on communication.</li> <li>Show more affection.</li> <li>Simplify relationship stress.</li> <li>Invest in your partner.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pay off debt.</li> <li>Save intentionally.</li> <li>Align spending with values.</li> <li>Plan for the future.</li> <li>Practice financial generosity.</li> </ul>
 <b>MIND</b>	 <b>FAMILY</b>	 <b>WORK</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Read more.</li> <li>Go to therapy.</li> <li>Meditate regularly.</li> <li>Learn something new.</li> <li>Cut screen time.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Spend quality time together.</li> <li>Take a family trip.</li> <li>Build traditions.</li> <li>Define shared values.</li> <li>Resolve conflicts better.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Find work you love.</li> <li>Earn a promotion.</li> <li>Start or grow a business.</li> <li>Balance work and life.</li> <li>Build a stronger network.</li> </ul>
 <b>SPIRIT</b>	 <b>COMMUNITY</b>	 <b>HOBBIES</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connect with your faith.</li> <li>Practice gratitude.</li> <li>Simplify your life.</li> <li>Give generously.</li> <li>Take a spiritual retreat.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Deepen friendships.</li> <li>Volunteer locally.</li> <li>Share meals with others.</li> <li>Seek mentorship.</li> <li>Advocate for change.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pursue creative passions.</li> <li>Join a team or group.</li> <li>Master a skill.</li> <li>Make time for fun.</li> <li>Try something new.</li> </ul>

Notice how capturing your aspirations sets you on a path to start defining what you want in more detail. With more clarity, you'll be on your way to setting a goal. That's where we're headed soon. But first, one final note.

My powers are ordinary. Only my application brings me success.

ISAAC NEWTON

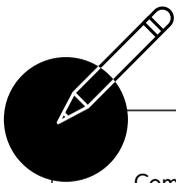


## → What About Fun?

Not all goals have to be about growth. Some goals can be just for fun. Planning a vacation, hosting game nights, or rewatching your favorite movies can be fulfilling goals, too.

*Some goals can be just for fun.*

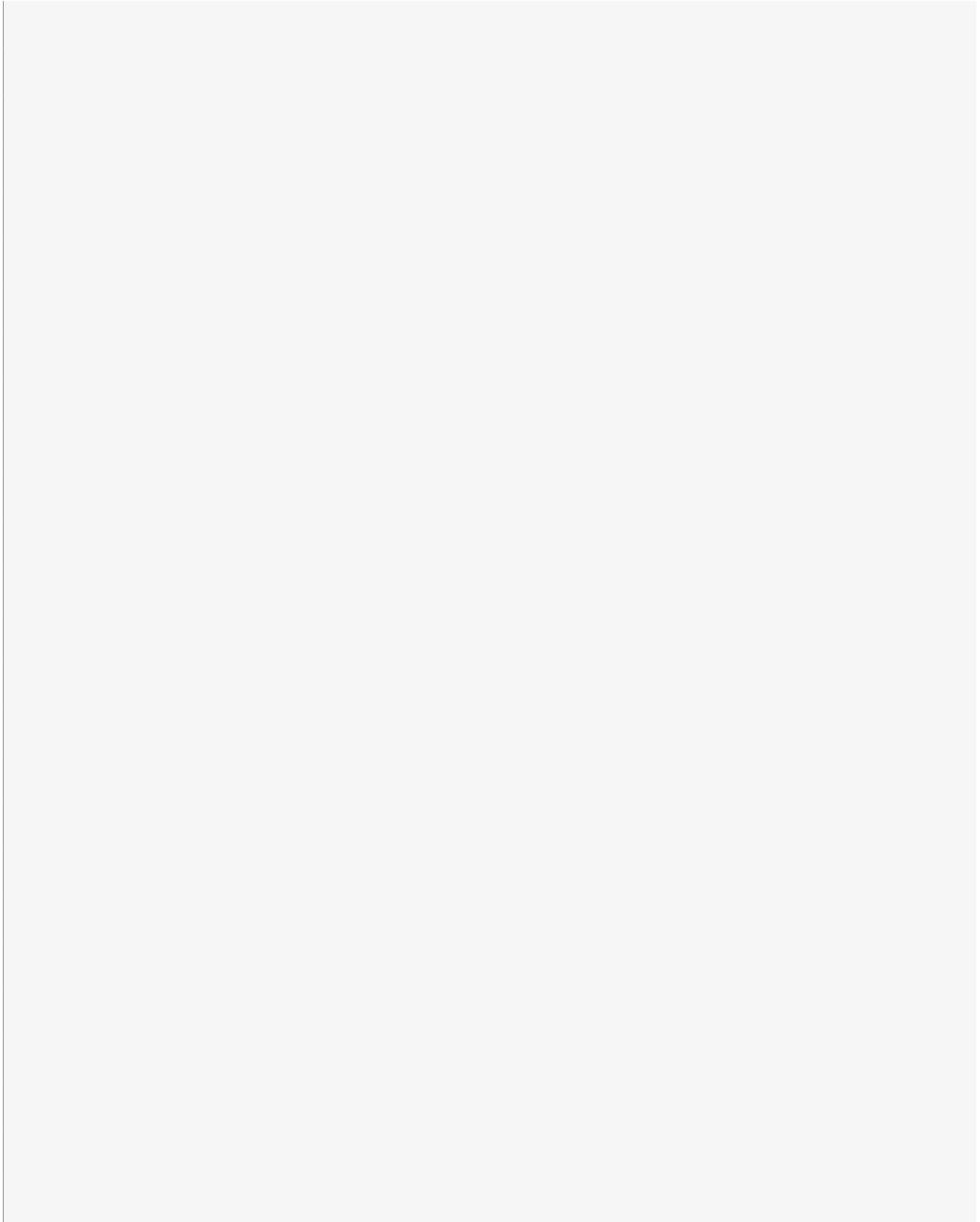
Sometimes, the things that bring you joy unexpectedly help you grow. So, ask yourself: what sounds exciting or interesting as you think about the coming year?



Complete **EXERCISE 4** on page 64. Take some time to write down your aspirations for the coming year.

Your goal should be out of reach but not out of sight.

ANITA DEFRANTZ



## EXERCISE 4

# *Next Year's* Hopes and Dreams

## INSTRUCTIONS AND EXAMPLE

Use the space on the following pages to jot down your hopes and dreams for the next year. Start by asking yourself, *What do I want in each of the nine domains in the next year?*

Try not to get bogged down with questions of what's possible. The important thing is to let your mind run, let your imagination go free, and let your heart speak. What do you hope? What do you want for each of these areas of your life?

For more ideas, revisit the lists on pages 60.

**BODY**


---

I want to learn how to fence.

---

I want to start strength training consistently.

---

I want to get 7-8 hours of sleep every night.

---

**MIND**


---

I want to journal consistently.

---

I want to find a counselor to help me address my anxiety.

---



---

**SPIRIT**


---

I want to join a prayer group and meet with them on a regular basis.

---

I want to become more involved in my church community.

---



---

**LOVE**


---

I want to have regular date nights with my spouse.

---

I want to attend a conference together that can help us manage conflict more effectively.

---



---

**FAMILY**


---

I want to attend at least half my son's T-ball games.

---

I want to start a game night tradition.

---



---

## NEXT YEAR'S HOPES AND DREAMS

**BODY**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**MIND**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**SPIRIT**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**LOVE**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**FAMILY**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**COMMUNITY**

---

**MONEY**

---

**WORK**

---

**HOBBIES**

---

## LESSON 4

# Design Your Future, *Part 2*

---

Now, it's time to find clarity, so you can confidently create the life you want. In this lesson, we'll take your aspirations and transform them into powerful, compelling, written goals using our proven seven-part framework.

You've probably heard of **SMART** goals. They have five different attributes, one for each letter of the **SMART** acronym. General Electric pioneered the approach decades ago. Based on insights from the best goal-achievement research available, we've updated and expanded the system so you can get the results you're after. There are seven attributes of the **SMARTER** system.

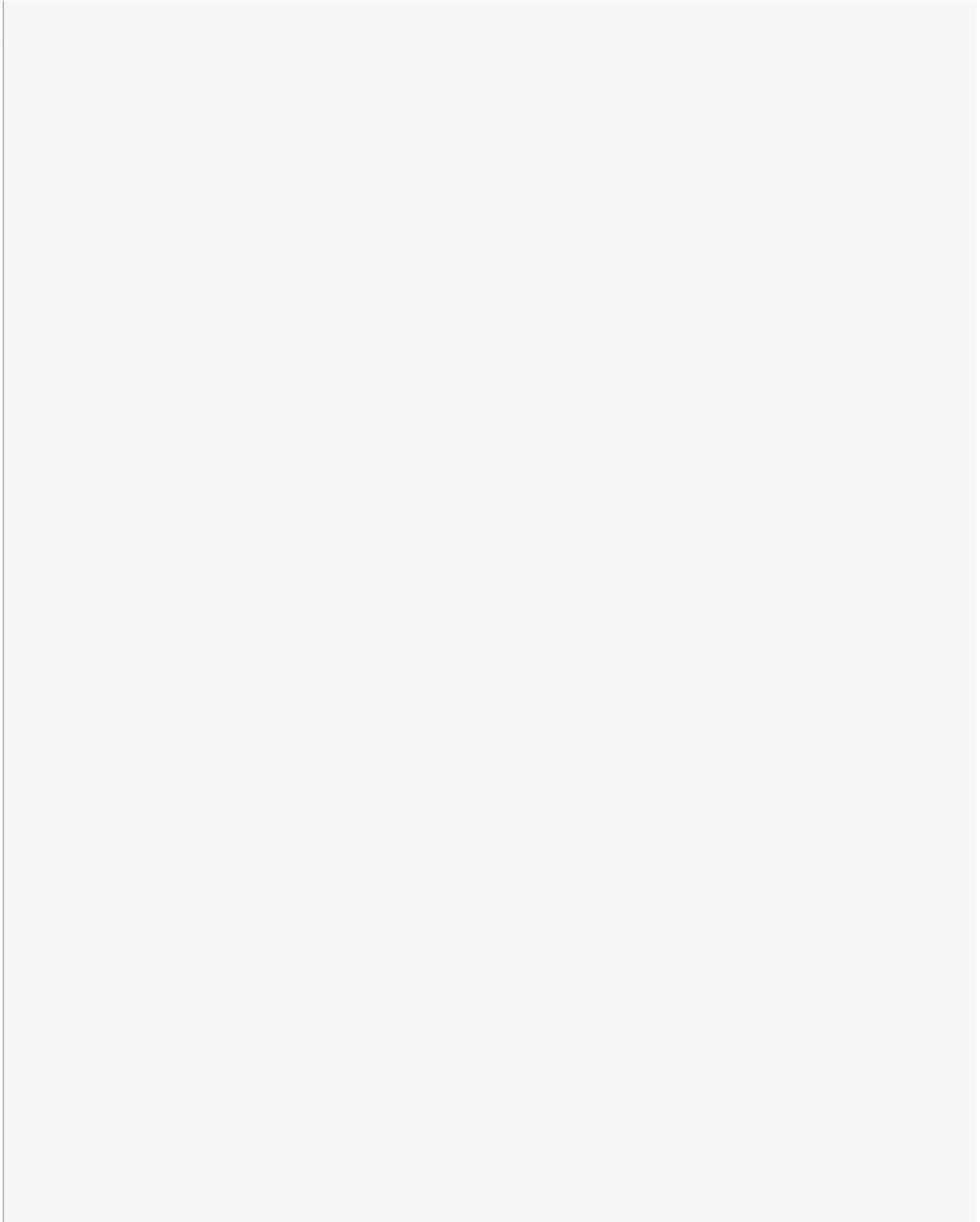
### → Specific

Focus is power. You can drive the same amount of water through two pipes and create greater force in one just by reducing its diameter. That's what happens when we narrow our goals. The more specific we are, the more likely we are to engage our focus, ingenuity, and persistence. Vague goals don't inspire us. But specific goals create a channel for our creativity and effort. All it takes is identifying precisely what you want to accomplish.

For example, "Learn photography." Is that specific? No. Photography is a huge field. You've got to narrow it down. "Complete John Greengo's 'Fundamentals of Photography' course." Now that's specific.

Whatever we achieve inwardly will change outer reality.

OTTO RANK



## → Measurable

This is important for two reasons. First, without some sort of measurement, how can you tell whether you've accomplished your goal? It's not very helpful—or inspiring—to say you want to make more money this year than last. How much more? There's a big difference between a cost-of-living adjustment and driving up your commissions by 30 percent. By making a goal measurable, you establish the criteria for success.

Second, keeping your goals measurable helps you track your progress. A measurable goal allows you to set markers and milestones along the way. And, honestly, half the fun is in the progress we make. The only way you know you're making progress is by measuring yourself against the target.

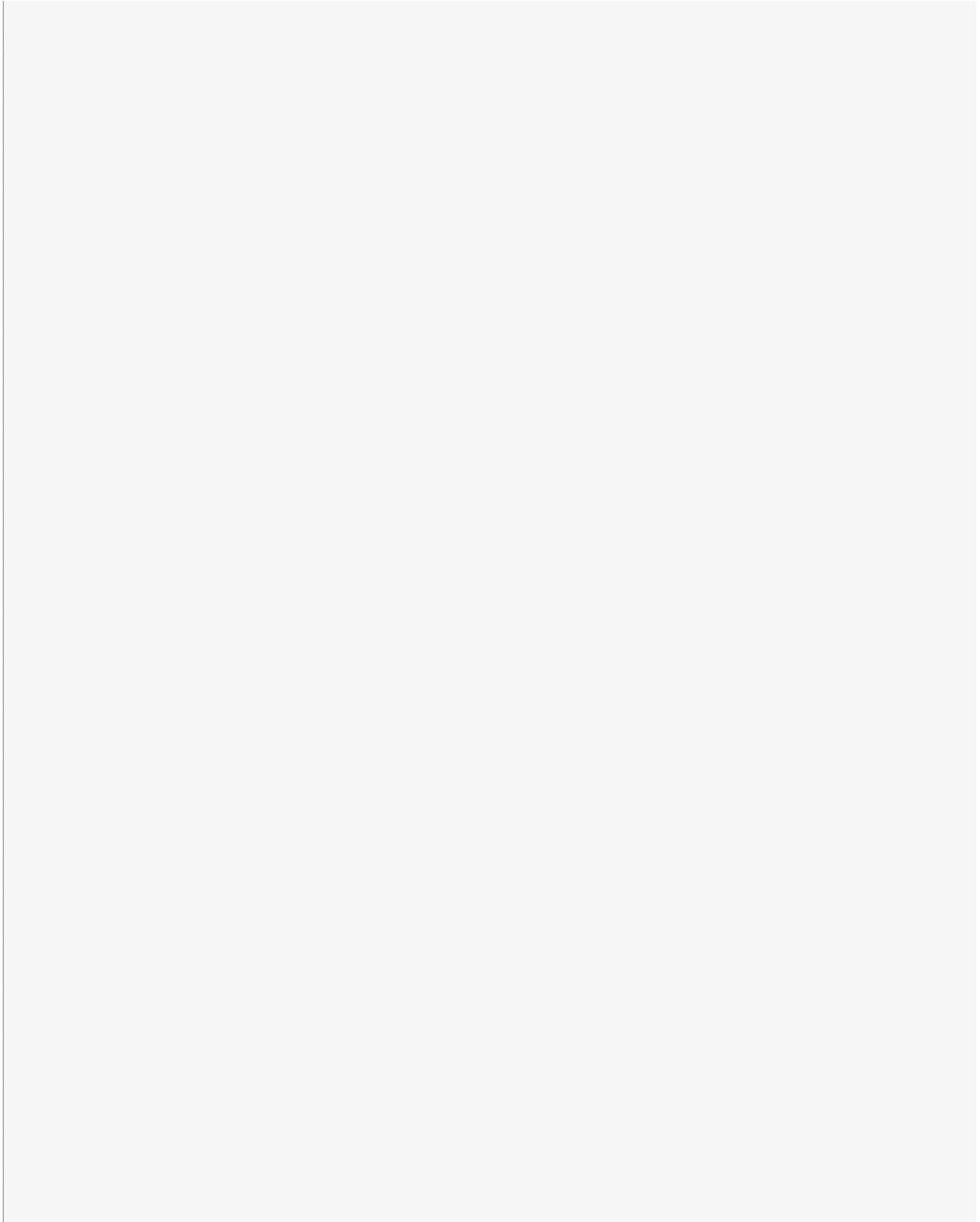
## → Actionable

Goals are fundamentally about what you're going to do. So when formulating your goals, it's important to get clear on the primary action. The easiest way to do this is to use a strong verb to describe and prompt the specific action you want to take. You don't want something like *am*, or *be*, or *have*. You want a verb like *run*, *finish*, or *eliminate*.

A couple of examples: "Be more consistent in saving." Is that actionable? No. That's a state-of-being verb. But something like "Deposit 10 percent of each paycheck into my savings account" is actionable. It starts with the verb *deposit*, and it's clear and directive about what you're supposed to do.

What you love is a sign from your higher self of what you are to do.

SANAYA ROMAN



## → Risky

We often talk about setting realistic goals. That's what the "R" in **SMART** goals stands for. But starting with "realistic" can set the bar too low. It triggers our natural desire to avoid loss, and we end up accomplishing less. As Orison Swett Marden, founder of *Success* magazine, said, "All who have accomplished great things have had a great aim... one which sometimes seemed impossible." We rise to challenges but hold back when it's too easy.

*We rise to challenges  
but hold back when  
it's too easy.*

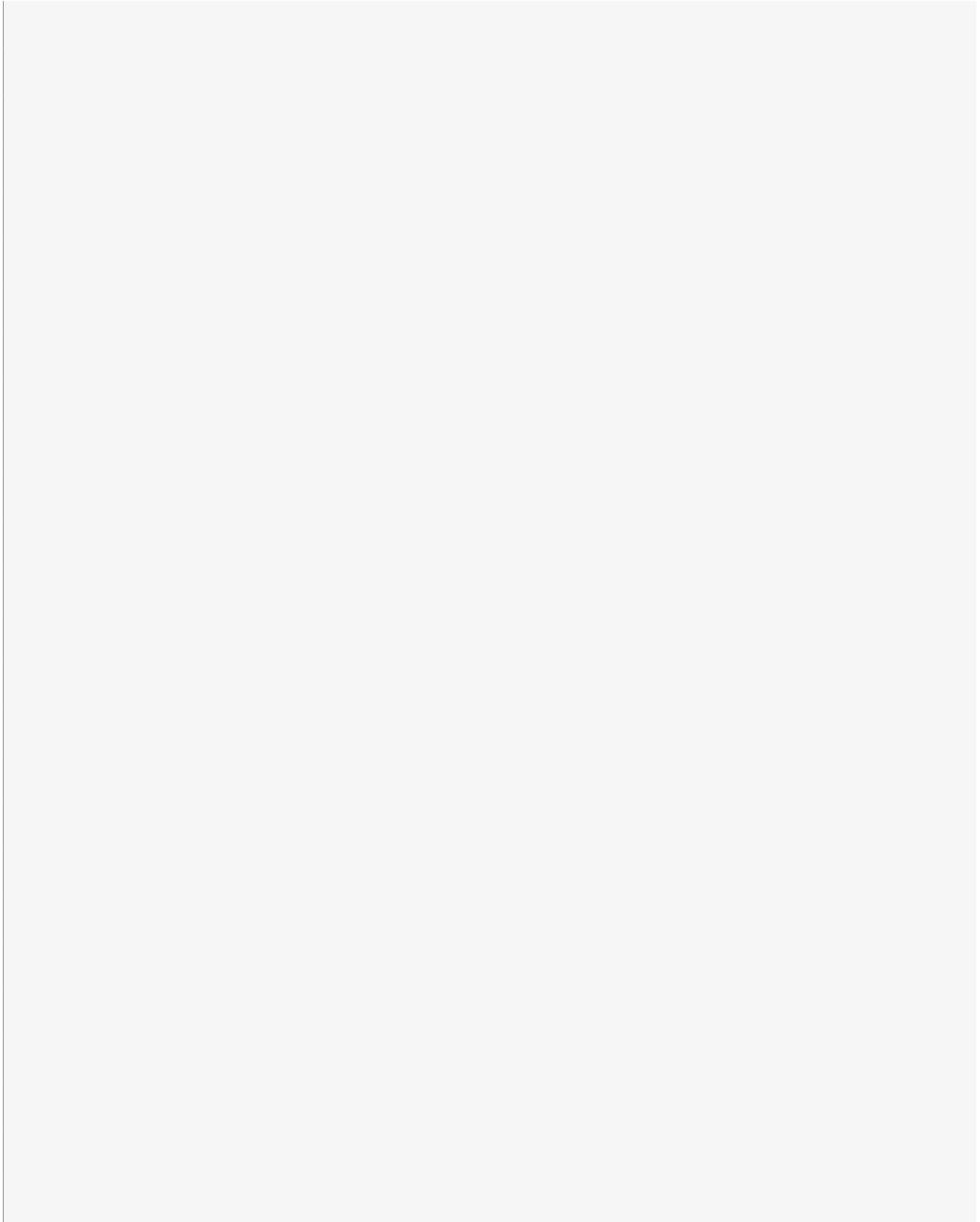
Dreaming of a better future can feel fragile and far away. So, we focus on how to achieve goals before committing to the *what*. This leads to downgrading aspirations, aiming low, and settling for less. Discomfort, however, is a catalyst for growth. It forces us to adapt and strive. Goals should push you outside your comfort zone. If you know exactly how to achieve a goal or already have the resources, it's probably not big enough. Winning requires stepping into the discomfort zone.

Think back to a time when you left your comfort zone—learning a skill, meeting someone new, or taking on a challenge. It likely wasn't fun at the moment, but the rewards were worth it. Most of life's best moments happen outside our comfort zone. Setting **SMARTER** goals helps engineer these experiences.

"How do you know if you're reaching far enough?" The answer lies in mixed emotions: fear, uncertainty, and doubt combined with excitement and expectation.

There's no pride in doing things easy. No one brags about walking up the little grassy slope.

PENN JILLETTE



The trick is setting goals that are appropriately challenging and not just plain crazy. There's a difference between discomfort and delusion. We can all step into the delusional zone if we're not careful. Goals in the discomfort zone challenge us and summon our best performance. Goals in the delusional zone invite defeat and merely leave us frustrated and discouraged.

How can you avoid veering into delusion? Life experience and trusted advisors help. Others can spot your blind spots better than you.

The main thing is to get outside your comfort zone. That's where you'll experience the growth you want, the solutions you need, and the fulfillment you desire.

## → Timebound

Goals need one or more of five time signatures: a deadline, frequency, start date, time trigger, or streak target. Broadly, goals fall into two categories: achievement goals and habit goals.

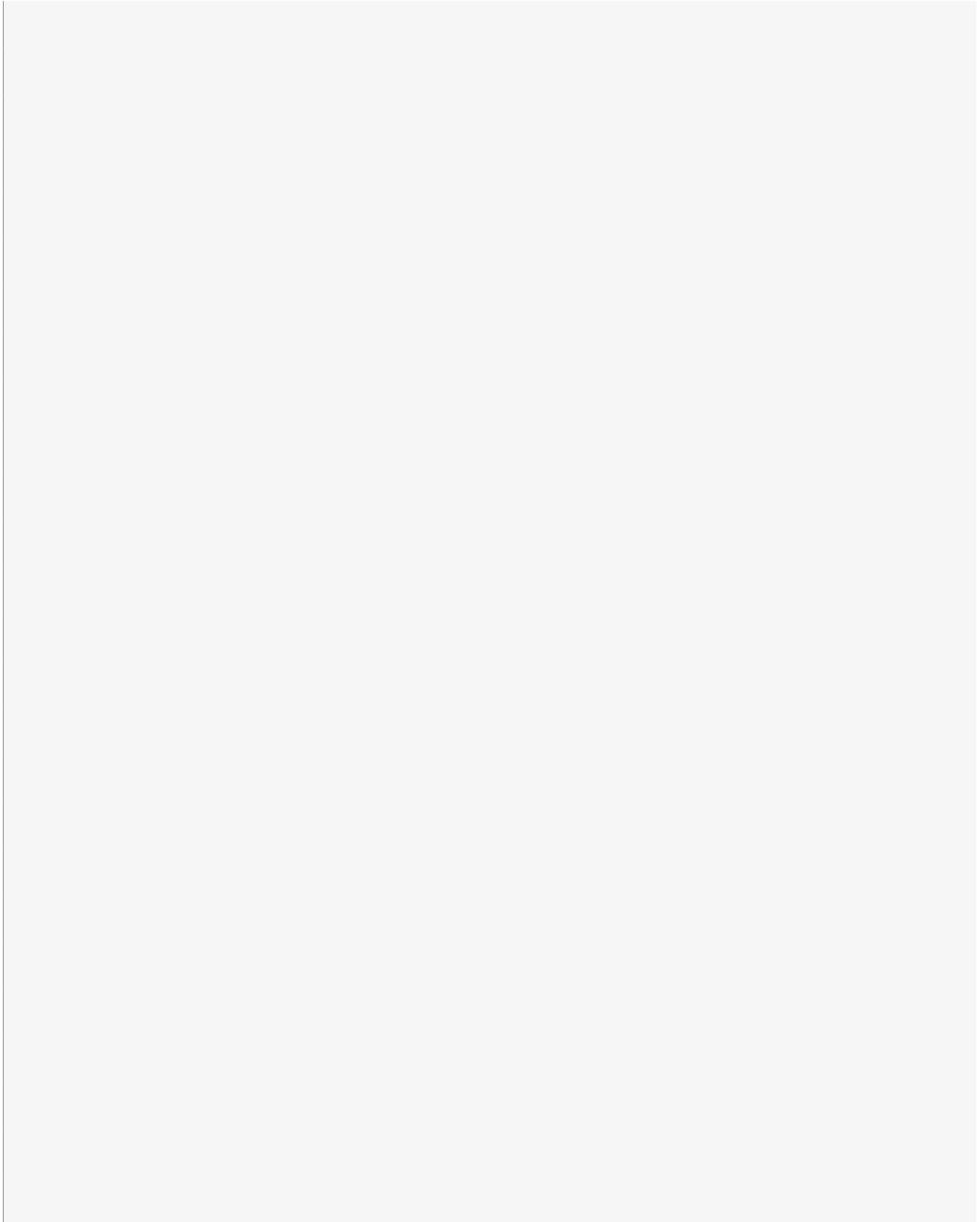
Achievement goals focus on one-time accomplishments, like paying off credit cards, improving your personal best for a half-marathon, or finishing a novel. Deadlines are crucial for these goals because they drive action. Without a deadline, "Increase sales revenue 20 percent" lacks focus. Adding one—like "by the close of Q2"—creates clarity and urgency. When the deadline arrives, you'll know if you succeeded.

Here's an easy opportunity to leap with some intention into your discomfort zone. It might feel better—more comfortable—to assign distant deadlines. But distant deadlines

*Short time horizons  
concentrate our effort.*

I have learned over the years that when one's mind is made up, this diminishes fear.

ROSA PARKS



discourage action. Long timelines give the illusion of plenty of time, causing effort to dissipate. Short time horizons concentrate our effort.

Research by Locke and Latham showed workers kept production at 100% even when timelines were cut by 40%. Similarly, shorter deadlines in personal goals can boost focus and leave margin for other priorities.

It's a little different when it comes to habit goals. Habit goals involve ongoing activity. Think about a daily meditation practice, a monthly coffee date with a friend, or walking each day after lunch. There's no firm deadline, because you're not trying to accomplish just one thing. You're trying to maintain a practice. But time signatures are still essential. The most effective habit goals utilize several, including:

**START DATE:** When you intend to begin installing your new habit

**FREQUENCY:** How often you plan to do the action

**TIME TRIGGERS:** When in the day you want to do the action

**STREAK TARGETS:** How many times you have to do the action before you can consider the habit second nature

To make this easy for you, there is a fill-in-the-blank template you can follow at the end of this lesson.

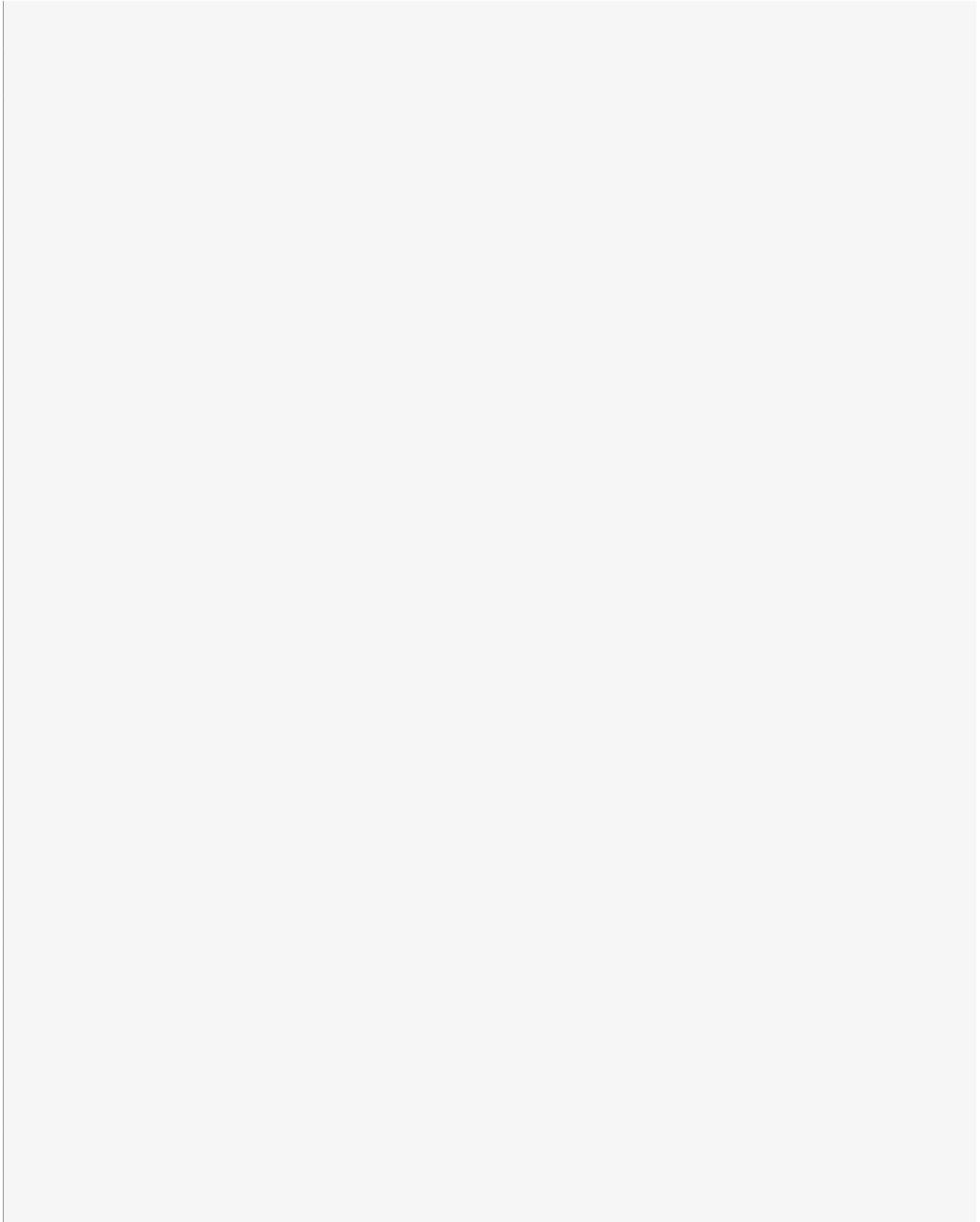
## → Exciting

Researchers say that we stand a better chance of reaching our goals if we are internally motivated to do so. External motivations might work for a while, but if we're not getting something intrinsic from the goal, we'll lose interest.

The problem is, most of us set goals we think are good for us. If we're really being honest, we often set goals *other people* think are good for us—spouses, friends, bosses, and so on. And, like we've explored, most of these goals are set from a place of shame.

Accepting oneself does not preclude an attempt to become better.

FLANNERY O'CONNOR



The trick is to set goals that are not only personally important but also personally inspiring. If you don't find your goals personally compelling, you won't have the motivation to push through when things get tough or tedious.

This is where you've got to be honest with yourself. Ask, *Does this goal inspire me? Does it engage my heart? Am I willing to work hard to make it happen?* You might even ask if you find it fun. All of these questions get at something we'll cover in the next step—finding your why.

Remember, we're setting risky goals. We're going to be tempted to quit at some point. Only an exciting goal can access the internal motivation you need to stay the course and achieve your goal.

## → Relevant

Relevance is about asking the question: "Does this goal fit with my life?" This attribute comes at the end of the list, because it's a good way to gut-check your goals before committing to them. We can all stumble on this point if we're not careful.

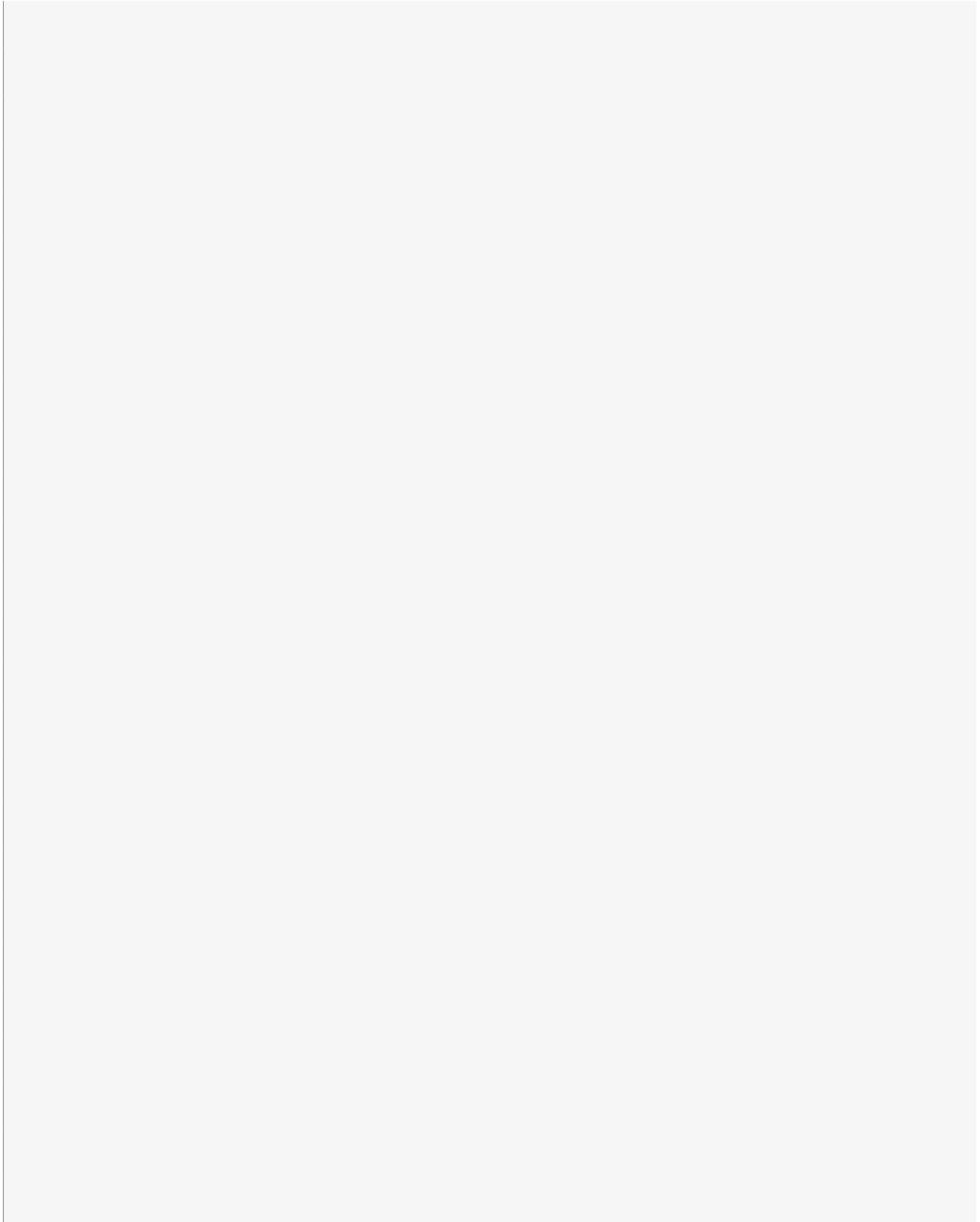
*We need goals  
that align with the  
legitimate demands  
and needs of our lives.*

It's easy to overestimate our capacity. Planning a new year can lead us to plan a new life. But our lives are already full—and we need to keep those commitments in mind. When we honor the real constraints of our lives as we set our goals, our efforts will be sustainable, supporting our success.

Are you a working parent with young kids? Your goals will look much different than an undergrad or an empty nester. Depending on your circumstances, going to med school might not be in the cards right now. And pursuing a new weekend-gobbling hobby might put unwanted strain on your family. You need to set goals that are relevant to your actual circumstances.

Human beings need physical and mental challenges and stressors or we deteriorate.

GREG LUKIANOFF



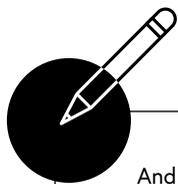
You also need goals that align with your values. We've already seen that we sometimes bend to outside pressure and set goals that go against the core of who we are. You have to set goals tied to your identity.

Finally, you need goals that align amongst themselves. They have to be relevant together. Setting multiple conflicting goals will only create friction and frustration.

That goes for setting too many goals in general. You don't need one big, crazy leap to land in the delusional zone. Sometimes you can drift there with the accumulated demands of multiple goals. It's easy to have aspirations far bigger than our calendars. The main thing to watch here is your bandwidth.

We recommend setting no more than 7–10 goals per year. And limit yourself to just two or three per quarter. That includes both personal and professional goals. You can always add a new goal once you complete an existing one. Overloading your goal list will undermine your focus, along with your results.

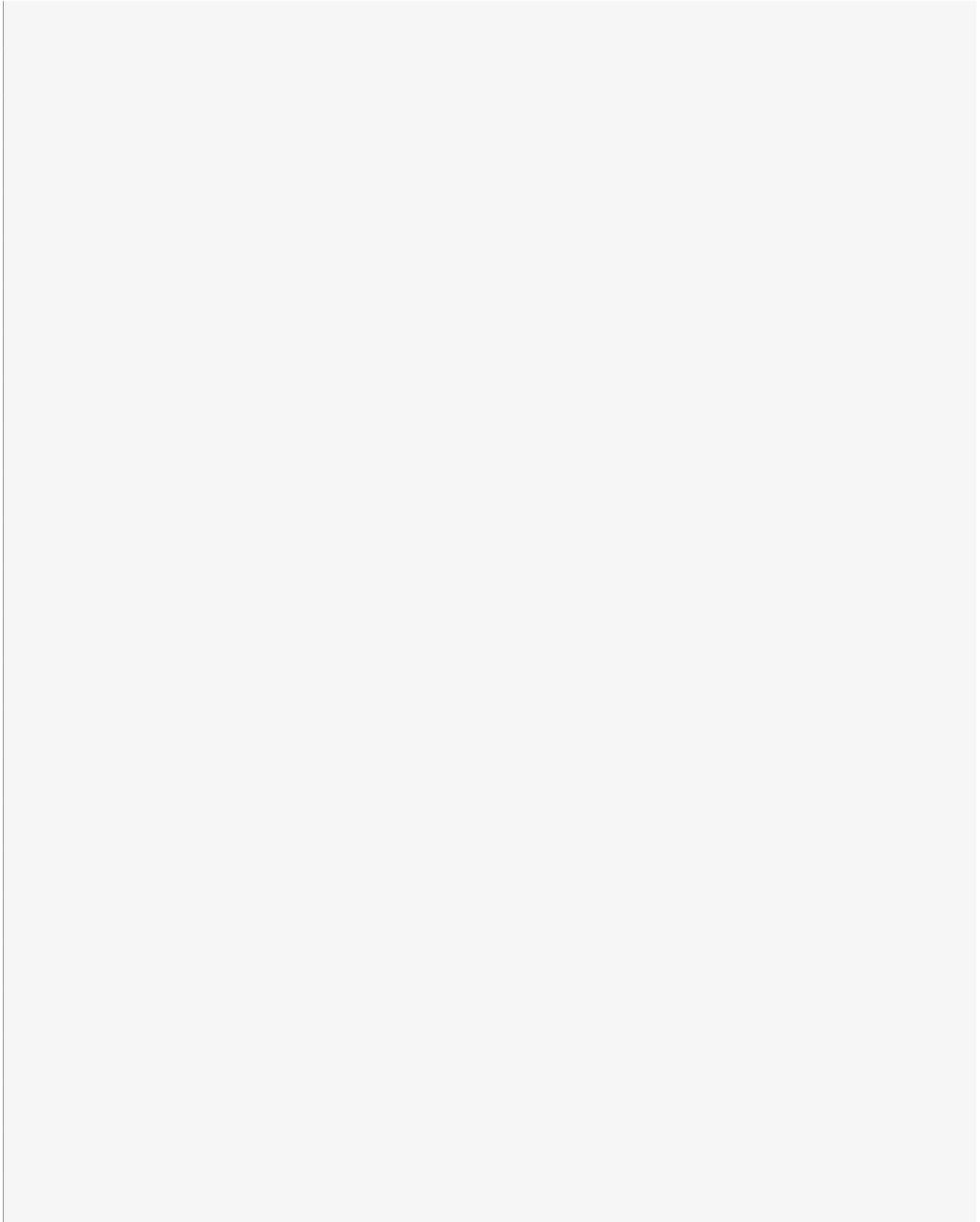
So that's the **SMARTER** system. **SMARTER** goals are specific, measurable, actionable, risky, timebound, exciting, and relevant.



And now it's time to write some **SMARTER** goals of your own. Turn to **EXERCISE 5** on page 86.

We all lie in suspense from day to day; in other words, you are the hero of your own story.

MARY MCCARTHY



**BONUS 4**

## Using Habits To Achieve Your Goals

Significant achievements are often the result of ingrained habits over time. Consider the following examples:

Bill and Nancy have an awesome marriage. It's not just that they were lucky and married the right person. They have intentionally cultivated intimacy. As simple as it sounds, they have gone on a date night every week for more than two decades. This habit has provided a context in which they can have meaningful conversations about the things that matter most. They also enjoy each other's company.

Spencer is in the best shape of his life. Whenever he goes in for his annual physical, his doctor is amazed. He has continued to improve for each of the last five years. The surprising thing is that Spencer just turned sixty last year. But his health is not an accident. It dramatically improved when he began to cultivate the habit of working out five days a week.

Larissa has built a seven-figure business in just three years. You might be tempted to write off her success due to the fact that she stumbled onto a great idea at exactly the right time. Certainly, that played a role. But if you asked her the secret to her success, she would chalk it up to her habit of making five sales calls every week.

In all these cases, habits are the driving force. They are an effective way to achieve your dreams, but only if you know when and how to use them.

Habits are most useful when you have a vague aspiration that you just can't seem to make measurable. For example, let's say you want to grow closer to God. You could set a habit goal like this: "Spend 20 minutes a day in the Bible reading and prayer, five days a week at 6:00 a.m., beginning January 1 and continuing for 70 days."

Another way to use habit is as a step—perhaps the only step—in completing an achievement goal. For example, let's say you want to write a 50,000-word book by June 30. You could identify several next steps, or you could focus on simply installing a habit. For example, "Write 500 words a day, five days a week, at 6:00 a.m. beginning on February 1 and continuing for 100 days." You'll notice that the examples we've included follow the SMARTER framework. It's just as important for habit goals as it is for achievement goals.

**BONUS 5****SMARTER Goal-Setting Templates and Examples****ACHIEVEMENT GOAL TEMPLATE**

Run	the Country Music Half Marathon	by April 21.
ACTIONABLE	SPECIFIC, MEASUREABLE, RISKY, & EXCITING	TIMEBOUND

RELEVANT

Read	50 business books	by December 31.
ACTIONABLE	SPECIFIC, MEASUREABLE, RISKY, & EXCITING	TIMEBOUND

RELEVANT

Raise	revenue by 50% by the end of fiscal year	2021.
ACTIONABLE	SPECIFIC, MEASUREABLE, RISKY, & EXCITING	TIMEBOUND

RELEVANT

**HABIT GOAL TEMPLATE**

Walk	2 miles	M-W-F
ACTIONABLE	MEASUREABLE, RISKY, & EXCITING	HABIT FREQUENCY
at 6am	starting June 1	for 12 weeks.
TIME TRIGGER	STARTING DATE	STREAK TARGET

RELEVANT

Practice	guitar	every weeknight
ACTIONABLE	MEASUREABLE, RISKY, & EXCITING	HABIT FREQUENCY
at 7pm	starting September 1	for 70 days.
TIME TRIGGER	STARTING DATE	STREAK TARGET

RELEVANT

Drink	64 ounces of water	every day
ACTIONABLE	MEASUREABLE, RISKY, & EXCITING	HABIT FREQUENCY
at 7pm	starting January 1	for 70 days.
TIME TRIGGER	STARTING DATE	STREAK TARGET

RELEVANT

**SMARTER GOAL EXAMPLES BY LIFE DOMAIN****BODY**

- Replace fast-food lunch with healthy meals from home each weekday, starting June 1.
- Run 30 minutes each day, 4 days a week at 6:30 a.m., starting March 4.
- Choose a regular bedtime and get 8 hours of sleep per night for the next 90 days beginning January 1.

**MIND**

- Read 2 books per month, starting in January.
- Research and find a therapist, and start regular monthly sessions by March 1.
- Buy a foreign language program and learn Spanish by November 1.

**SPIRIT**

- Set aside 15 minutes in the morning, 6 days a week, for reading and prayer starting January 1.
- Meditate for 30 minutes each day, 4 days a week beginning February 1.
- Journal at least 5 minutes at the end of each day starting January 1.

**LOVE**

- Create a date-night profile on Netflix and identify 20 movies for a weekly date beginning in May.
- Plan 2 regular dates each month and get them on the calendar by January 15.
- Pick 3 errands or tasks my spouse regularly does but doesn't enjoy. Do one each week for him/her beginning April 1.

**FAMILY**

- Leave the office by 5:00 p.m. to have enough time for dinner and games with the kids starting in January.
- Have the kids brainstorm 25 meals. Cook at least 1 each weekend beginning in February.
- Set aside 7 vacation days to spend with family at our favorite location. Schedule by March 15.

## COMMUNITY

- Join an athletic club/training group to meet new people by February 1.
- Volunteer with Habitat for Humanity on a local build by July 1.
- Take a painting/wine-tasting class to meet new people by August 1.

## MONEY

- Pay off remainder of car loan in the amount of \$8,000 by August 25.
- Reduce eating out to 1 meal each week beginning January 1.
- Pay down \$5,000 in credit card debt by May 1.

## WORK

- Launch my new product by March 30.
- Add 5,000 email subscribers to database by June 15.
- Quit job and launch my new business by October 1.

## HOBBY

- Volunteer for the City Mission beginning on March 1.
- Visit 2 new restaurants each month beginning February 1. Make a list by January 30.
- Research 12 of the best action movies/comedies ever filmed and watch 1 each month beginning January 1.

**EXERCISE 5**

# Setting SMARTER Goals

**INSTRUCTIONS AND EXAMPLE**

Have a look at your list of hopes and dreams from Exercise 4. This exercise is all about distilling those down into goals. We recommend a mix of achievement and habit goals. Also make sure you include goals from several different life domains.

Using the following Annual Goals list, write down up to eight goals for the next year using the **SMARTER** framework.

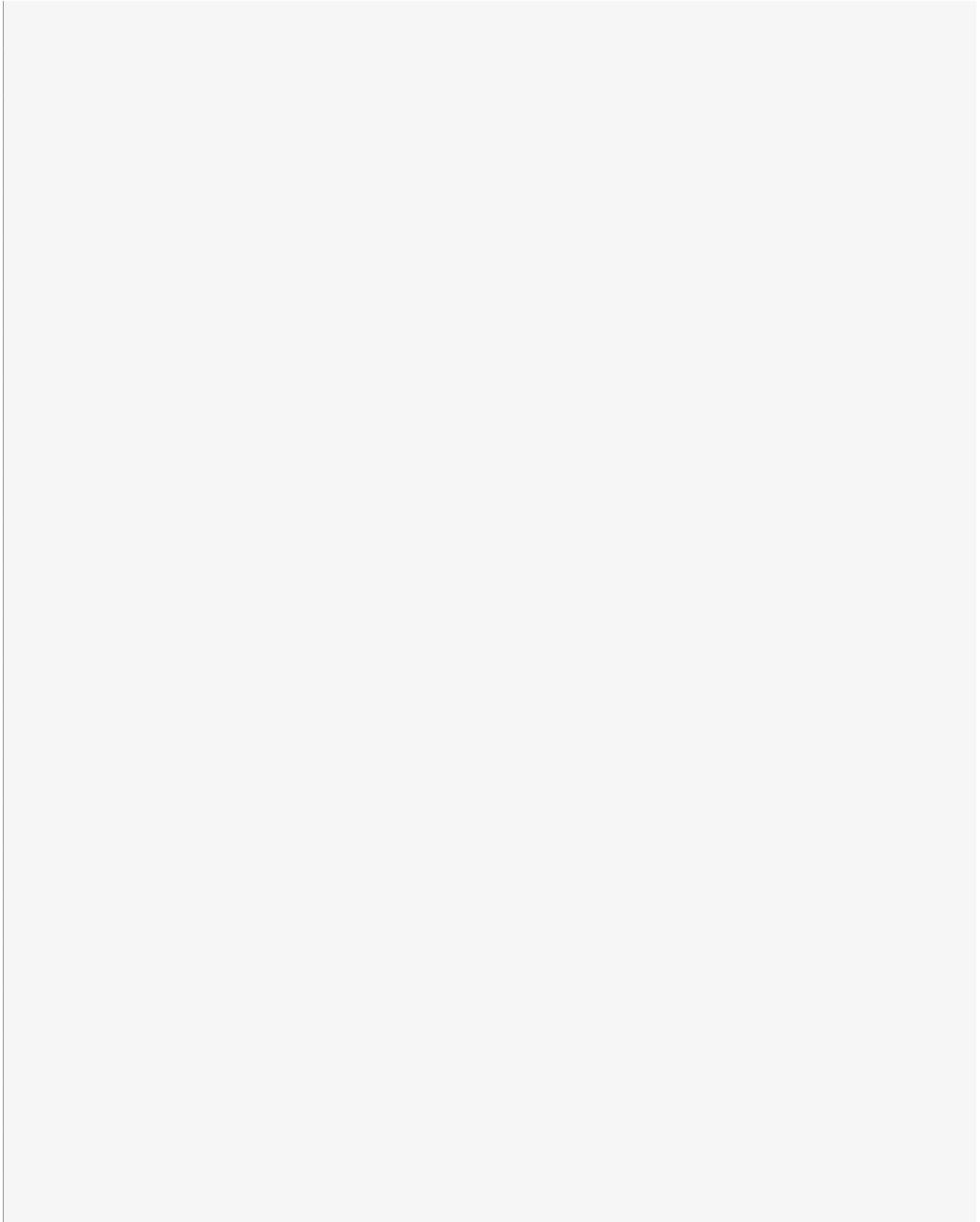
Once you've defined your **SMARTER** goals, rewrite each of them in the Goal Summary sections at the top of the Goal Detail pages beginning on page 124.

√	#	GOAL STATEMENT / Write your annual goals here.	Q*
		Develop the habit of reading a passage from my C.S. Lewis devotional every morning at 5 am, starting January 1 for 90 days.	Q1
		Read 30 business books by December 31.	Q4
		Develop a twice-daily meditation habit starting April 1 and for the next 90 days.	Q2
		Run the Rock 'n' Roll Half Marathon in Nashville on April 21.	Q2
		Begin regular date night habit every Thursday at 6 pm starting January 1 and continuing for through March 31.	Q1
		Take a two-week family vacation to the Outer Banks, North Carolina by September 30.	Q3
		Make 5 calls to qualified recruits every weekday at 9:30 am starting July 1 for 13 weeks.	Q2
		Close in sunroom with new windows by November 1.	Q4
		Increase savings from \$6,000 to \$30,000 for a down payment on a house by December 31.	Q4



See the world through a lens of beauty, because that will give you the optimism to keep changing the world.

JANE CHEN



## LESSON 5

# Find Your *Why*

---

Have you ever felt doubt creeping in while working toward a goal? That's the moment when resistance strikes hardest, and the path forward feels uncertain. It happens to everyone. We start with enthusiasm and energy, but sooner or later, we hit what's often called the "messy middle." The finish line seems farther away than we expected, and competing demands or limited resources can make us question whether we'll ever get there.

The messy middle is a natural part of pursuing anything meaningful. It's easy to believe that with enough planning, you can sidestep obstacles and glide to success. But life rarely works that way. Unexpected challenges will arise, testing your resolve. The key to pushing through is having a compelling "why"—a deep motivation that pulls you forward when resistance is strongest.

To conquer the messy middle, focus on three critical actions.

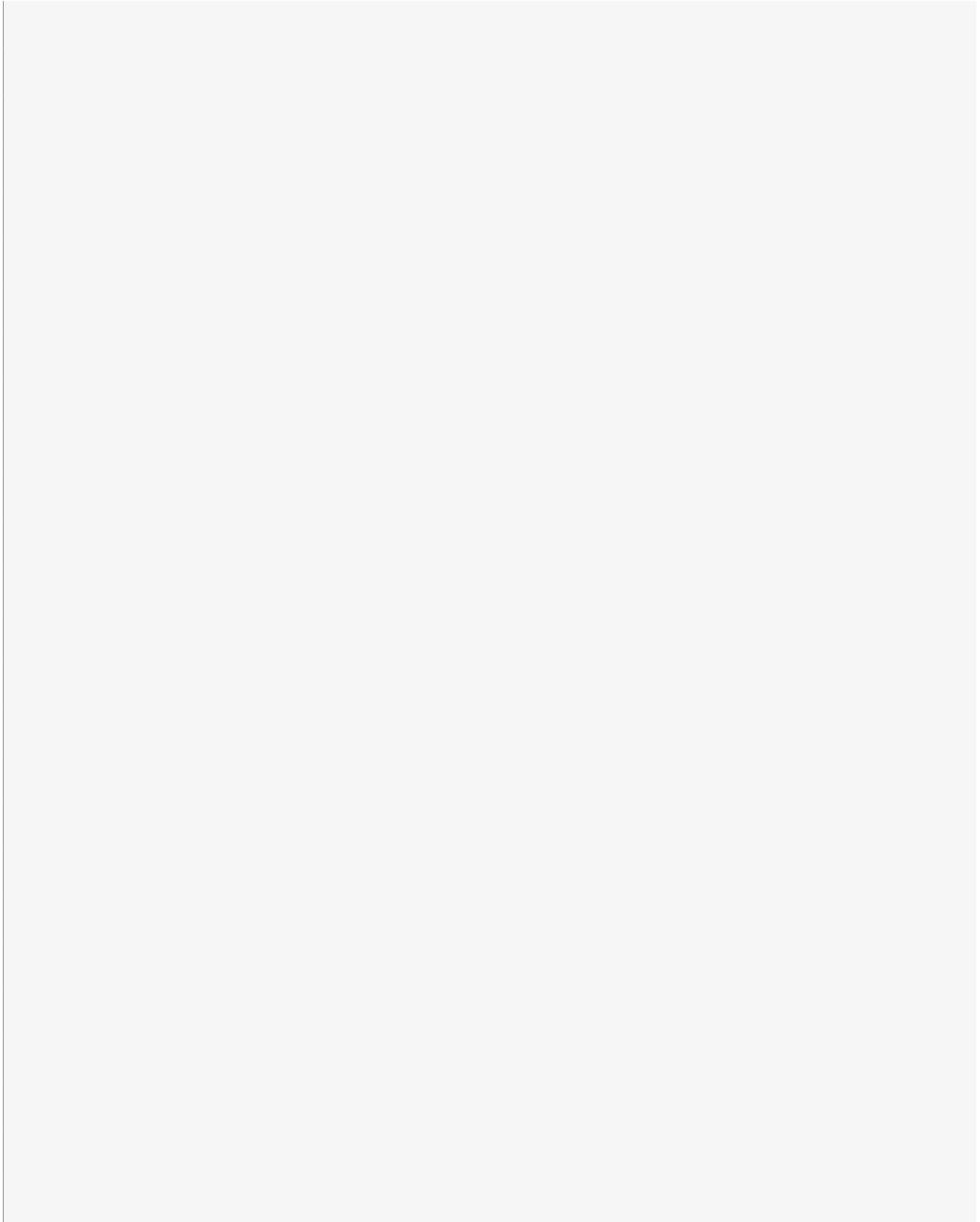
### ACTION 1

## Identify Your Key Motivations

No one makes it through the messy middle to achieve their goals unless they deeply desire what's on the other side of the discomfort. Think about parenting, getting in shape, or reaching a major professional milestone. These challenges test our perseverance and resolve.

The way you live your days is the way you live your life.

ANNIE DILLARD



To succeed, you need to connect with what researchers call "autonomous motives"—the deeply personal reasons behind your effort. These motives stem from your hopes, values, and ambitions. They're intrinsic and uniquely yours. They're those deep desires from **Lesson 3**.

What are the personal *whys* behind your goals? Start by listing every motivation that comes to mind. Then, distill your list down to the top three. While you may have many reasons, identifying three crystal-clear motivations will make your why more compelling, memorable, and effective.

## ACTION 2

### Internalize Your Key Motivations

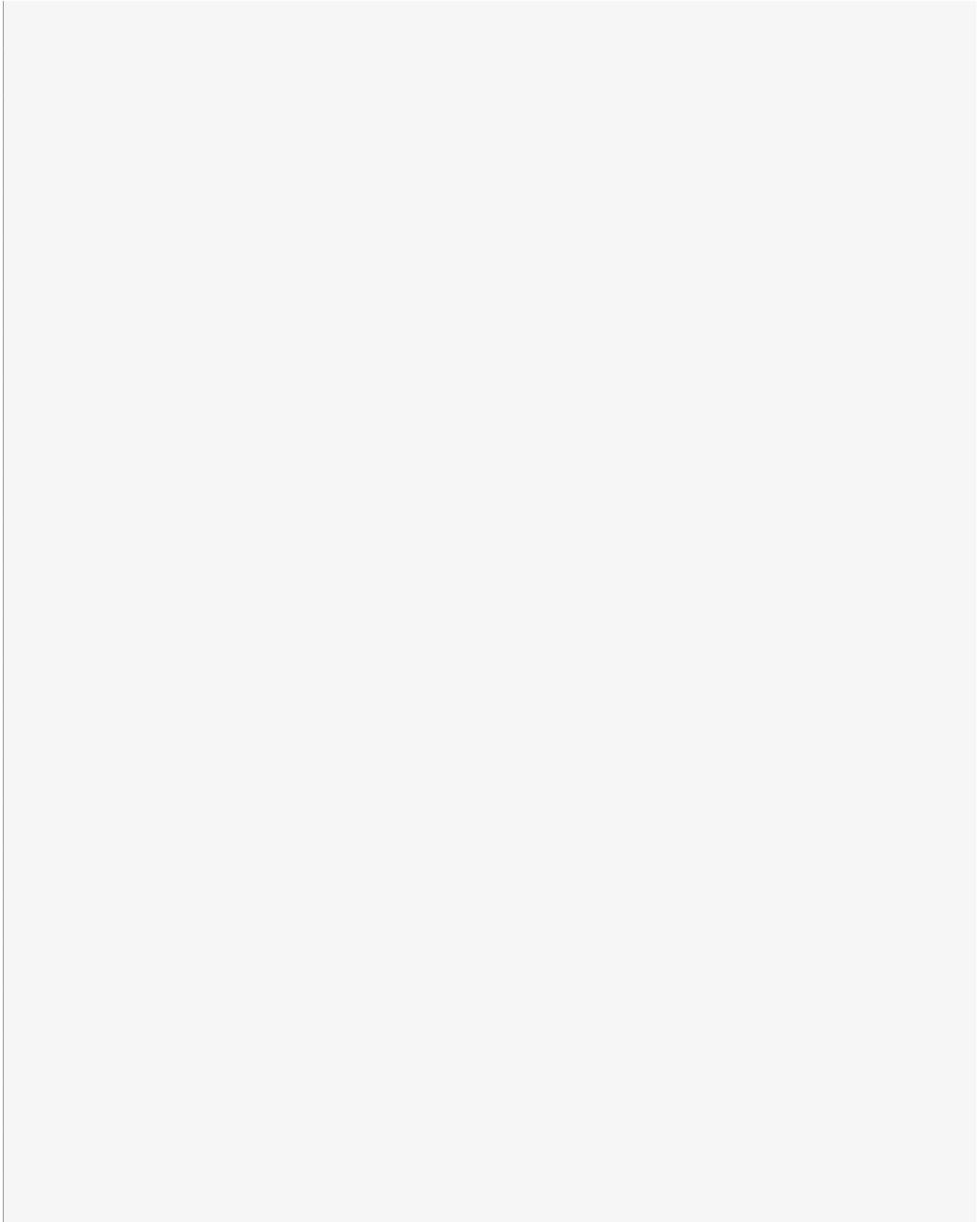
One reason New Year's resolutions fail is that we don't truly value what we claim to care about. When challenges arise, we quit. That's why internalizing your key motivations is essential, and you can do it in two ways.

1. **CONNECT INTELLECTUALLY.** Intellectual buy-in comes from research or a compelling argument. It gets you logically committed to the goal.
2. **CONNECT EMOTIONALLY.** Imagine the pride of achieving your goal or the disappointment of missing it. Emotions are powerful drivers. As you identify your motivations, you might find a goal holds immense personal value. When you truly value something, you'll endure more than you thought possible.

On the other hand, you might realize a goal no longer matters deeply to you—and that's okay. Letting go creates space for what matters more. The key is knowing where you stand intellectually and emotionally with your goals.

Dreams and reality are opposites. Action synthesizes them.

ASSATA SHAKUR



Internalized motivations transform actions into identity. As Florida State University psychologist Anders Ericsson and science writer Robert Pool explain, "Once you've practiced and seen results, the skill itself becomes part of your motivation. You take pride in it, enjoy compliments, and your identity changes." At this point, the activity feels more like an investment than an expense.

Fully valuing your motivations is what keeps you moving forward.

### ACTION 3

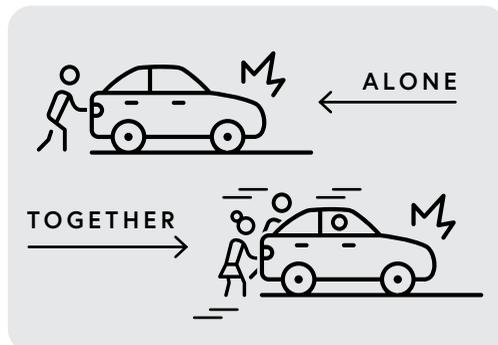
## Include Others

The idea of the self-made person is a myth. Society often glorifies independence, self-reliance, and self-control, but true success depends on communal support.

When we face challenges, it's tempting to isolate and overwork. Asking for help can feel hard—it means letting go of some control. But the truth is, no one succeeds alone. Success always requires help.

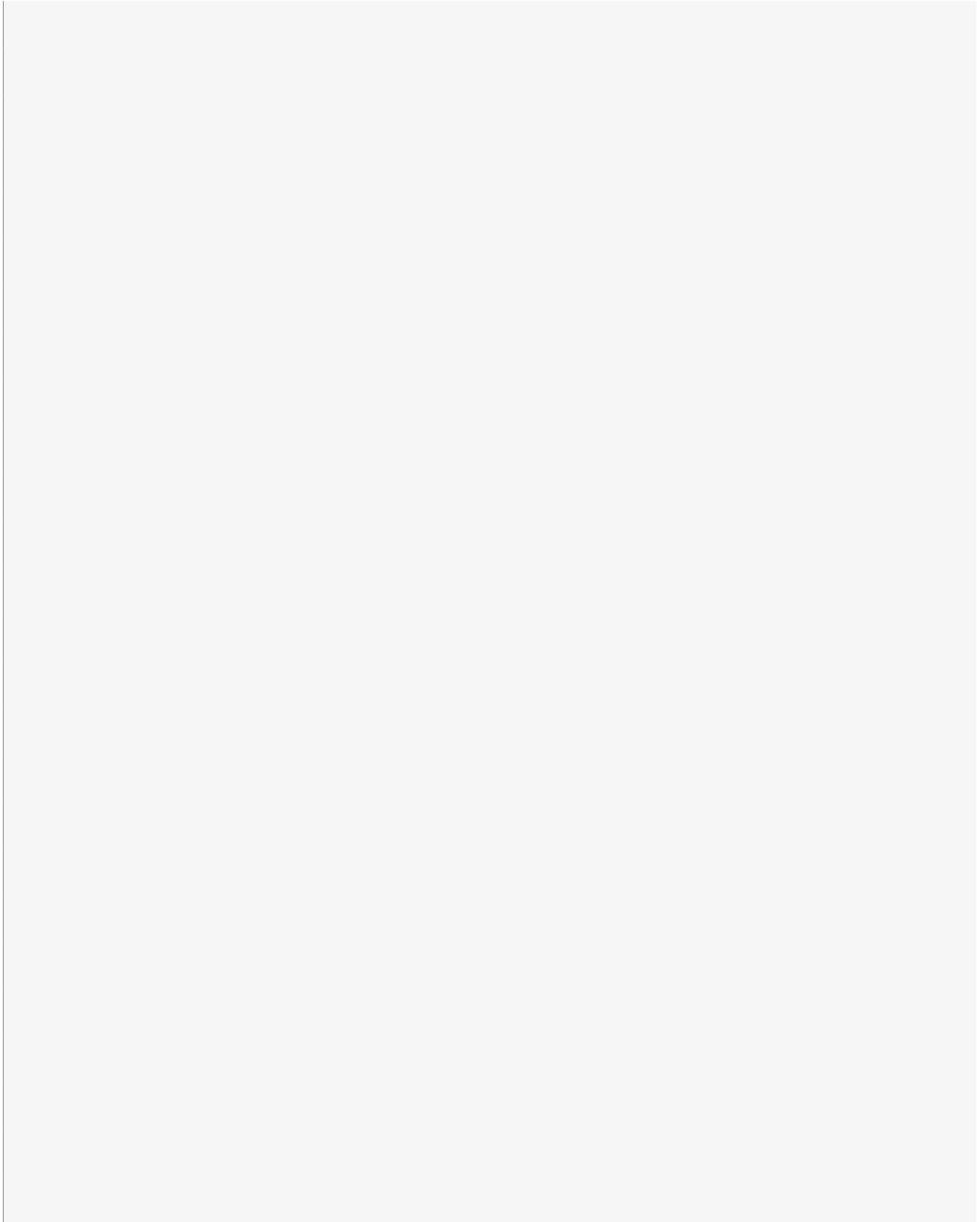
*Success always  
requires help.*

Who you surround yourself with matters. Instead of struggling solo, join communities that support shared success. The right peers help you stay committed through the messy middle, offering encouragement, insights, and practical solutions. Surrounding yourself with scarcity thinkers makes staying motivated difficult, while abundance thinkers provide the energy and perspective needed to keep moving forward.



Change means movement. Movement means friction.

SAUL ALINSKY



Supportive relationships also boost self-control. Accountability from people who care about your goals strengthens your resolve. Healthy competition can inspire you too—seeing others make progress toward similar goals reignites your drive to keep going.

Peer support takes many forms:

- ✓ Online communities provide connection and shared experiences.
- ✓ Masterminds or coaching groups offer guidance and best practices.
- ✓ Mentorship circles provide wisdom and accountability from experienced leaders.
- ✓ Accountability groups create spaces for members to encourage and challenge one another.

Intentional relationships make us more productive, creative, and capable than we could ever be alone. They're essential for achieving your best year ever.

*Intentional relationships make us more productive, creative, and capable than we could ever be alone.*

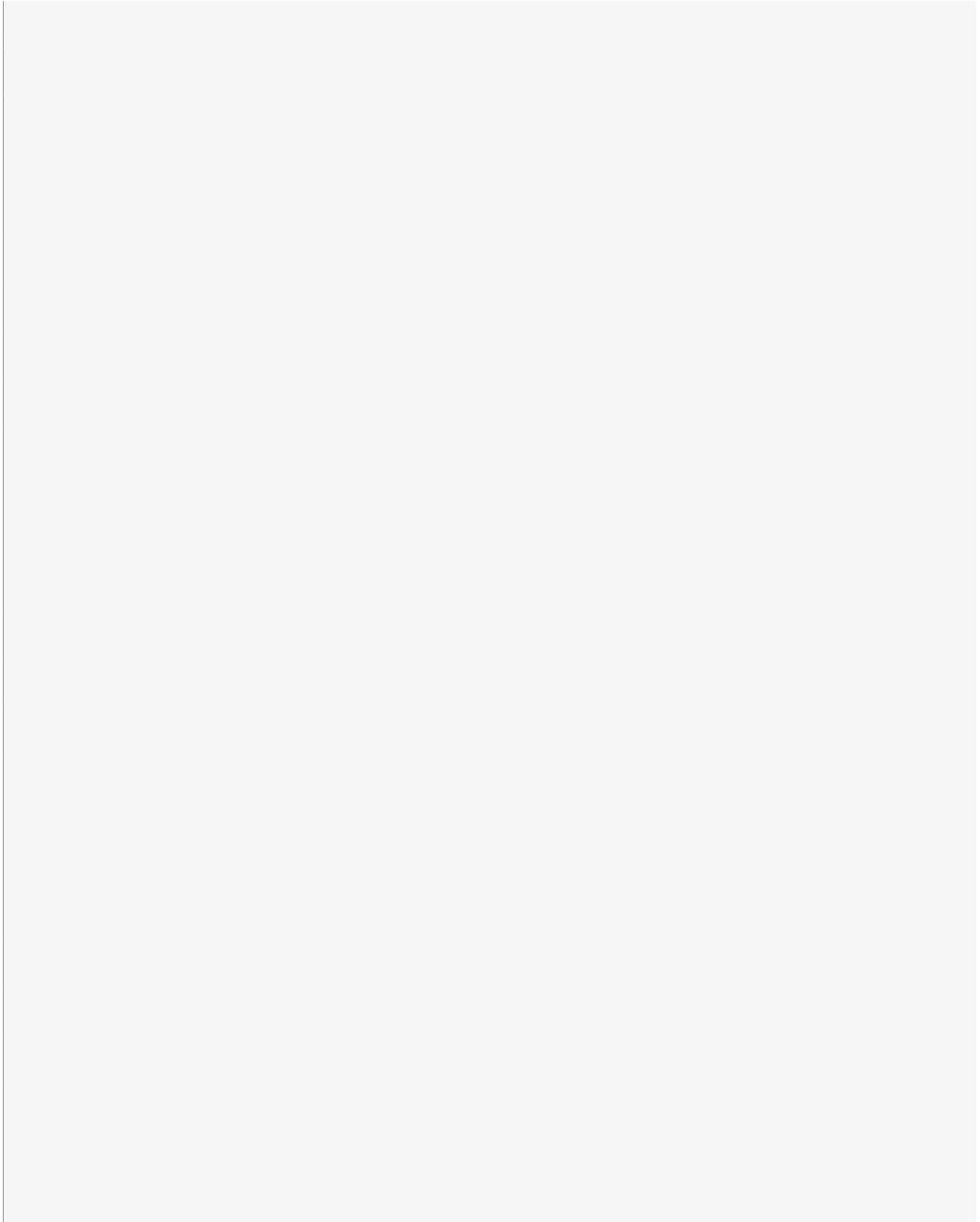
*Your Goal Achievement Community* | Double Win Coaching

Double Win Coaching is for high-achievers committed to growing and achieving goals together. It combines connection, coaching, mentorship, and accountability. Learn more at [bestyearever.me/coach](https://bestyearever.me/coach).

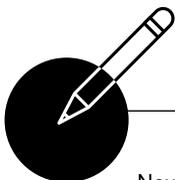


Don't sit down and wait for the opportunities to come. Get up and make them.

MADAM C. J. WALKER



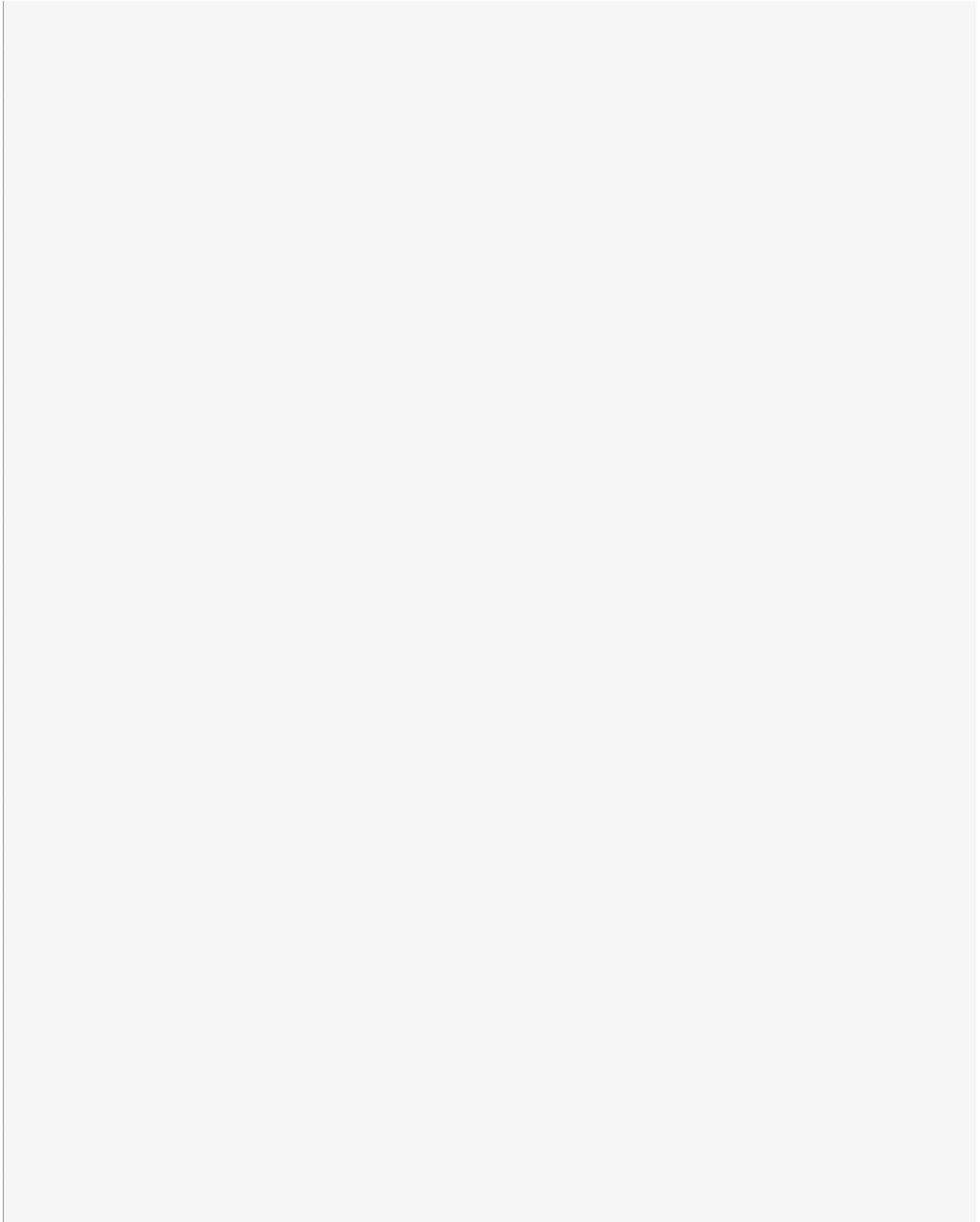
When progress feels impossible, unleash the power of your why with three actions: first, identify your key motivations; second, internalize them; and third, involve others. Everyone encounters the messy middle at some point. Don't let it stop or derail you. Instead, reconnect with your why and find the drive to push through to the other side.



Now it's time to turn to **EXERCISE 6** on page 104 and define your why.

You may be disappointed if you fail, but you are doomed if you don't try.

BEVERLY SILLS



**BONUS 6**

## Track Your Progress

Progress is a powerful motivator. When we see momentum building, it's easier to keep moving toward our goals—whether they're habit-based or achievement-focused.

Let's start with habits. You've probably heard the myth that it takes "21 days to form a habit." That's not true. A simple habit, like flossing, might take that long. But more complex habits—like leaving work on time, exercising regularly, or daily check-ins with your spouse—take much longer. How can we stick with them?

The key is tracking progress with a streak. Jerry Seinfeld used a calendar to mark each day he wrote a joke, creating an unbroken chain he didn't want to break. You can do the same. Gamifying progress can make it even more engaging, like using FitBit challenges or apps like Plant Nanny to track water intake. Gamification keeps you motivated until the habit becomes second nature.

For achievement goals, progress tracking is more straightforward. Focus on what Ayelet Fishbach calls the "small area principle." As Dan Sullivan says, "Measure the gain, not the gap." Before the halfway point, focus on how far you've come—it's encouraging. After the halfway point, shift focus to how close you are to finishing—it's energizing.

This approach works because early on, tracking progress feels motivating. Focusing on what's left can feel overwhelming. But after the halfway mark, looking at progress made might tempt you to stop early, thinking you've done "enough." That's when shifting focus to the finish line helps you push through.

Take a moment to reflect on your goals. How will you capture the progress you're making? Pairing a strong why with clear progress makes your goals unstoppable.

**BONUS 7**

## An Action Plan for the Overwhelmed

We have a busy problem. When you ask people how they're doing, the default response is often, "I'm really tired" or "I'm super busy." It's almost a badge of honor. While feeling overwhelmed happens to everyone, staying in that state is unhealthy. If your default is "crazy busy," here are three actions to break free.

**ACTION 1****FOCUS ON HIGH-LEVERAGE WORK**

The key to overcoming overwhelm is doing less, not more. Doubling down when you're overwhelmed rarely works. Instead, focus on fewer tasks with greater impact. Overwhelm often comes from trying to do too much with limited resources, time, and emotional energy.

Start by identifying what only you can do. Use a brain dump to list everything overwhelming you, both personally and professionally. Write it down using a simple tool like a notebook or whiteboard—externalizing these tasks makes them feel more manageable.

Next, get input from someone you trust to help identify what's truly essential and what can be let go.

**ACTION 2****ELIMINATE PRODUCTIVITY SINKHOLES**

Productivity sinkholes are tasks that take significant time and energy but produce minimal results. These are often tasks you dread and procrastinate, making them even more overwhelming.

Once identified, eliminate, automate, or delegate these tasks. Removing these drains will help you regain time and mental clarity.

**ACTION 3****SCHEDULE YOUR MOST IMPORTANT TASKS**

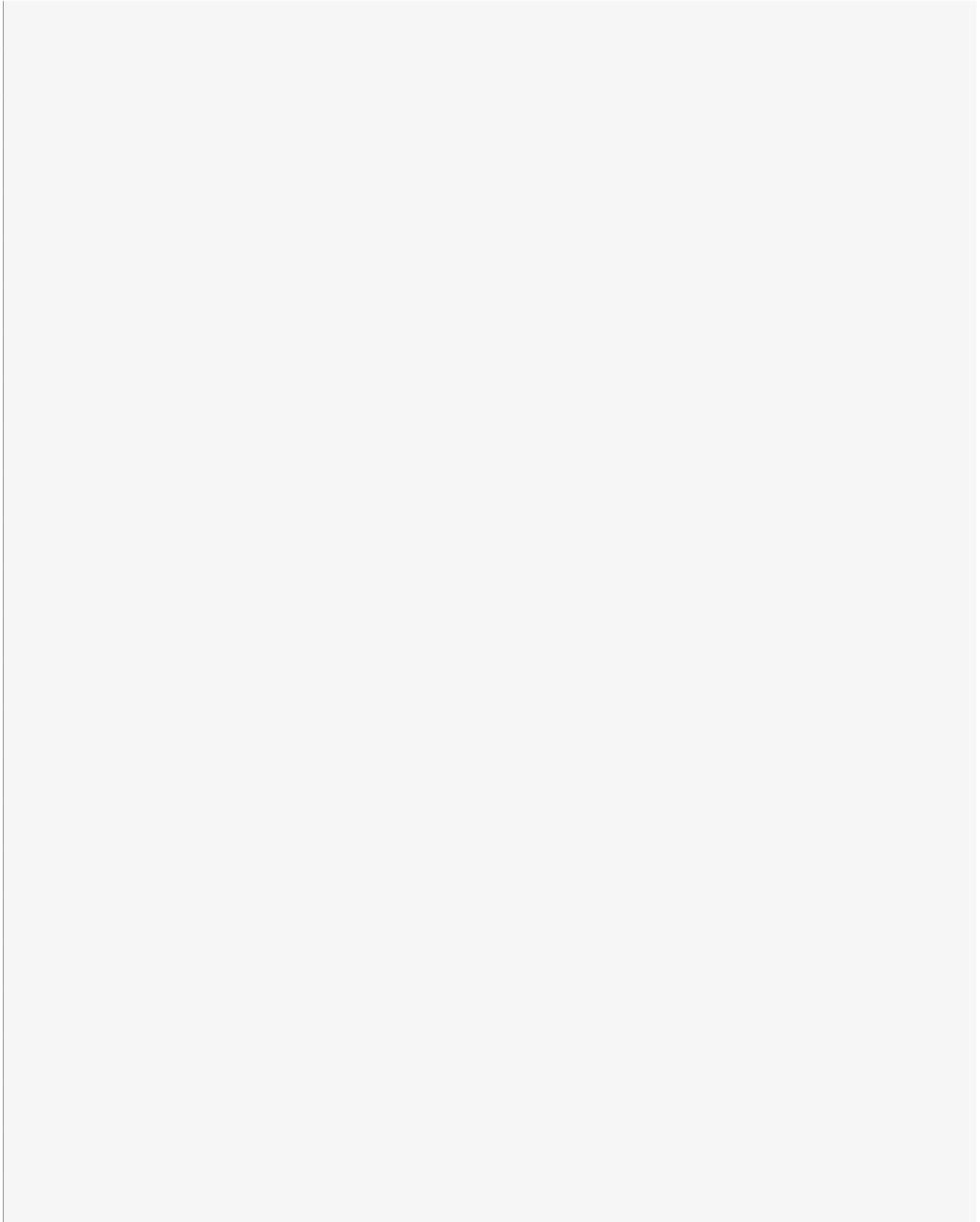
In many workplaces, meetings dominate the day, leaving evenings and weekends for actual work. This cycle perpetuates overwhelm. To break it, schedule your tasks just like appointments.

A scheduled task creates a boundary against interruptions. If someone asks for that time, simply say, "I have another commitment. Can we pick another time?" No explanation is needed—commitments command respect.

Protecting your calendar restores your time and focus, helping you escape "crazy busy" mode. By taking these three actions—focusing on high-leverage work, eliminating productivity sinkholes, and scheduling your most important tasks—you'll find freedom from overwhelm and be amazed at your results.

Sometimes things become possible if we want them bad enough.

T.S. ELIOT



**EXERCISE 6**

# Defining Your Why

**INSTRUCTIONS AND EXAMPLE**

First, for each of your goals, write down several motivations. Ask yourself: Why is this goal important to me personally? What's at stake if I achieve it, and what's at stake if I don't?

Second, review your list and identify your top three motivations for each goal. Write them in the Key Motivations section of the Goal Detail pages starting on page 124. If it's helpful, you can also use these pages to decide how you'll celebrate when you reach your goals.

Third, identify a few individuals or groups who can support you in achieving your goals or provide healthy competition. List them on the following pages.

**GOAL 1 MOTIVATIONS**

Running is how I destress and help manage my anxiety.

If I don't run, I tend to get overwhelmed easily.

Running keeps my blood pressure under control.

Running gives me more energy and helps me sleep better.

Running is a great way to show up for my family.

**PEOPLE**

Church running group

Friend Jamie

My family

**GOAL 2 MOTIVATIONS**

Finishing by September allows me time to review and edit.

I really want to get my message out into the world.

Publishing a book will give me some credibility and serve as a good lead source for my business. I love to write.

This habit will give me time to myself every morning.

**PEOPLE**

Writing group

Colleague

Editor

Friend Sam

**GOAL 3 MOTIVATIONS**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**PEOPLE**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**GOAL 4 MOTIVATIONS**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**PEOPLE**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# DEFINING YOUR WHY

GOAL 1 MOTIVATIONS

PEOPLE

GOAL 2 MOTIVATIONS

PEOPLE

GOAL 3 MOTIVATIONS

PEOPLE

GOAL 4 MOTIVATIONS

PEOPLE

**GOAL 5 MOTIVATIONS**

**PEOPLE**

--

--

**GOAL 6 MOTIVATIONS**

**PEOPLE**

--

--

**GOAL 7 MOTIVATIONS**

**PEOPLE**

--

--

**GOAL 8 MOTIVATIONS**

**PEOPLE**

--

--

## LESSON 6

# Make It Happen

---

You've already mastered four essential skills:

- ✓ Upgrading your beliefs by embracing liberating truths.
- ✓ Completing the past and adopting an abundance mindset to move forward.
- ✓ Designing a compelling future with SMARTER goals.
- ✓ Harnessing intrinsic motivation to power through the messy middle.

Now it's time to turn knowledge into action. We're about to dive into three proven steps that will set you up for success and help you achieve your goals. These time-tested actions will launch you into your best year ever!

### ACTION 1

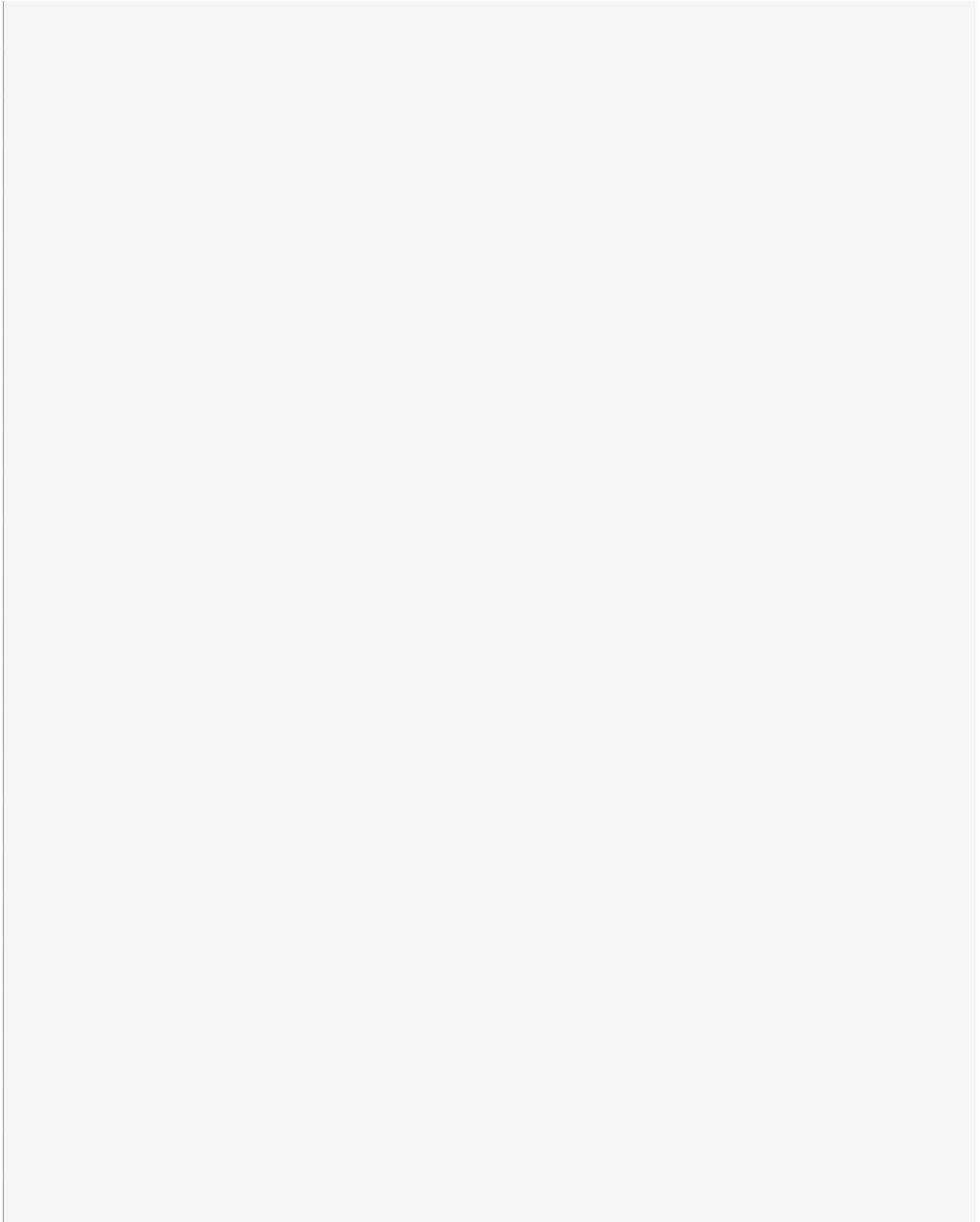
## Take The Stairs

The Empire State Building stands over 1,200 feet tall—about a quarter mile from sidewalk to top. It has 1,576 steps, and every year, runners compete to see who can climb them fastest, often finishing in 10 to 12 minutes. No one can leap to the top in a single bound, but anyone can get there one step at a time. That's exactly how goals work.

In **Lesson 4**, we talked about setting big, challenging goals in your discomfort zone. Achieving them isn't about taking one giant leap; it's about breaking them into manageable steps. Start by focusing on two or three goals per quarter. Then, break those goals into weekly objectives—smaller, actionable steps toward the finish line.

We're hoping to succeed; we're okay with failure. We just don't want to land in between.

DAVID CHANG



For example, if your goal is to write a book, your weekly objective might be outlining chapters or drafting a sample section. These objectives are your Weekly Big 3. They may also include tasks for projects outside your goals. Every week, aim to include at least one or two goal-related objectives.

Next, break those weekly objectives into daily tasks—your Daily Big 3. Limit yourself to three focused tasks per day. Long to-do lists are overwhelming, but a targeted list keeps your day manageable. Even if you only complete your Daily Big 3, you'll make consistent progress toward your goals.

Think of the Daily Big 3 as individual steps and the Weekly Big 3 as flights of stairs. It might take time, but going step by step, floor by floor, will get you to the top.

This approach also beats procrastination. The first step toward any goal is usually the hardest. Starting with a small, simple task lowers the barrier to action, builds momentum, and boosts your mood.

Breaking goals into steps also keeps them visible all year long. The biggest challenge with goals is losing sight of them amid life's distractions. Regularly identifying next steps ensures your goals stay top-of-mind.

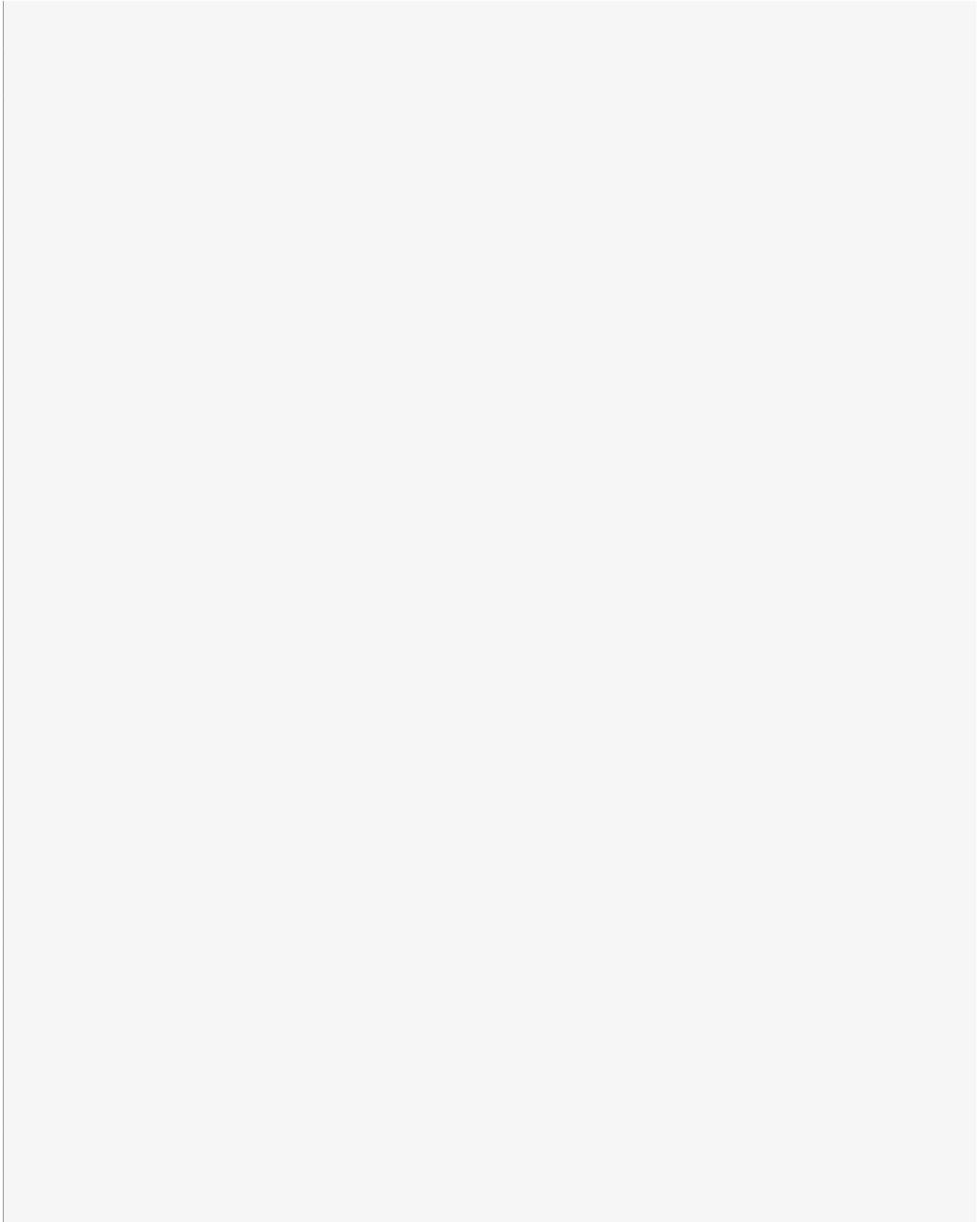
We recommend reading your annual goals daily. With just 7–10 goals, this takes about a minute. Do it during your morning routine, workday startup, or journaling time. As you review your goals, ask: *What can I do today to get closer to the top?* Choose small, concrete tasks you can finish easily. Then, the next day, take another step.

That's how big goals are achieved—one step at a time.



The chief idea of my life . . . is the idea of taking things with gratitude,  
and not taking things for granted.

G. K. CHESTERTON



## ACTION 2

## Program Your Autopilot

Pursuing goals takes mental energy. You're constantly solving problems, evaluating options, and making decisions. It can be draining, especially if you're already tired, distracted, or weary. When that happens, you're more likely to lose momentum—or even quit. The key is making your efforts self-sustaining so you don't have to think about them constantly. You can do this by leveraging habits and rituals.

Habits and rituals automate regular behaviors, reducing the mental energy required. The decision-making is already done, making it easier to act and follow through. It's better to set your intention once and let habits sustain the activity.

For example, if you want to develop more intimacy with your spouse, you could create a habit goal to go out for dinner every Friday at 6:00 p.m., starting March 1 and continuing for fifty-two weeks. Or, if your goal is to write a 50,000-word book by June 30, you could create a habit of writing 500 words a day, five days a week, at 6:00 a.m., starting February 1 and continuing for 100 days.

State your habit goal using the SMARTER framework for a clear plan. Then schedule the actions. Add them to your calendar. If you use the Full Focus Planner, you can use the Daily

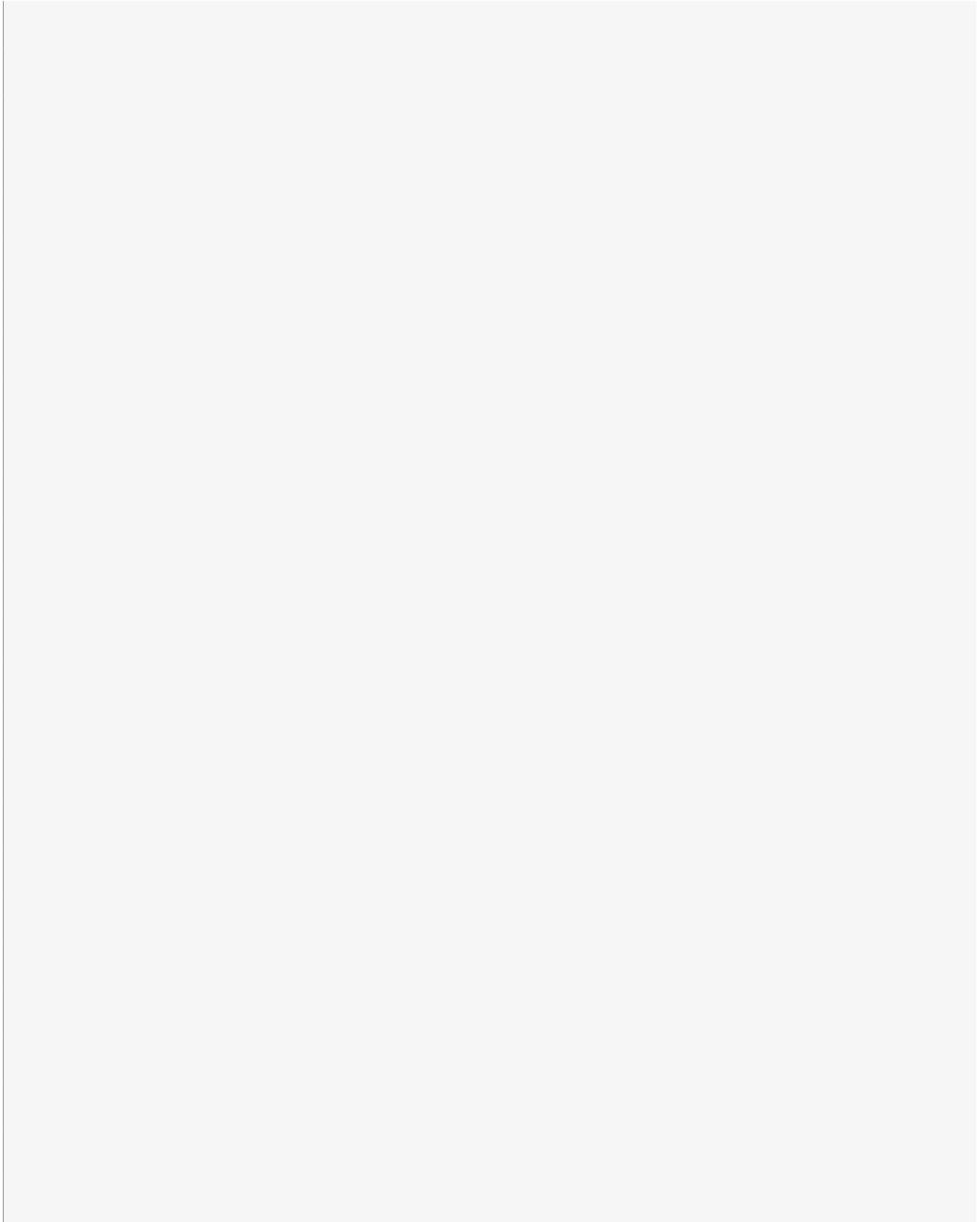
Rituals or Ideal Week pages. What gets scheduled gets done. Once the habit is installed, achieving your goal becomes autopilot.

*What gets scheduled gets done.*

If you're struggling to maintain a habit goal, Activation Triggers can help. Activation Triggers are actions or cues that streamline the process of reaching your goals. They anticipate obstacles and set up your desired response in advance. By locking in decisions when your intention is strongest, you remove the need for decision-making when you're least motivated.

The key to victory [is] creating the right routines.

CHARLES DUHIGG



Research from over 200 studies shows that using this method makes you three times more likely to achieve your goals. The trick is to leverage your best thinking early, so you can repeat positive actions again and again.

### ACTION 3

## Adjust As You Go

Did you know rockets are only on target when they take off and when they land? In between, their navigation systems make constant adjustments to stay on course.

Goal achievement isn't rocket science, but it does require regular course corrections. Life is unpredictable, and without a system to respond to change, even well-planned goals can go off track.

*Goal achievement isn't rocket science, but it does require regular course corrections.*

That's where the Weekly Preview comes in—it's your compass for reaching your goals. It's like an After Action Review for your week, paired with a look ahead. You'll also define your Weekly Big 3.

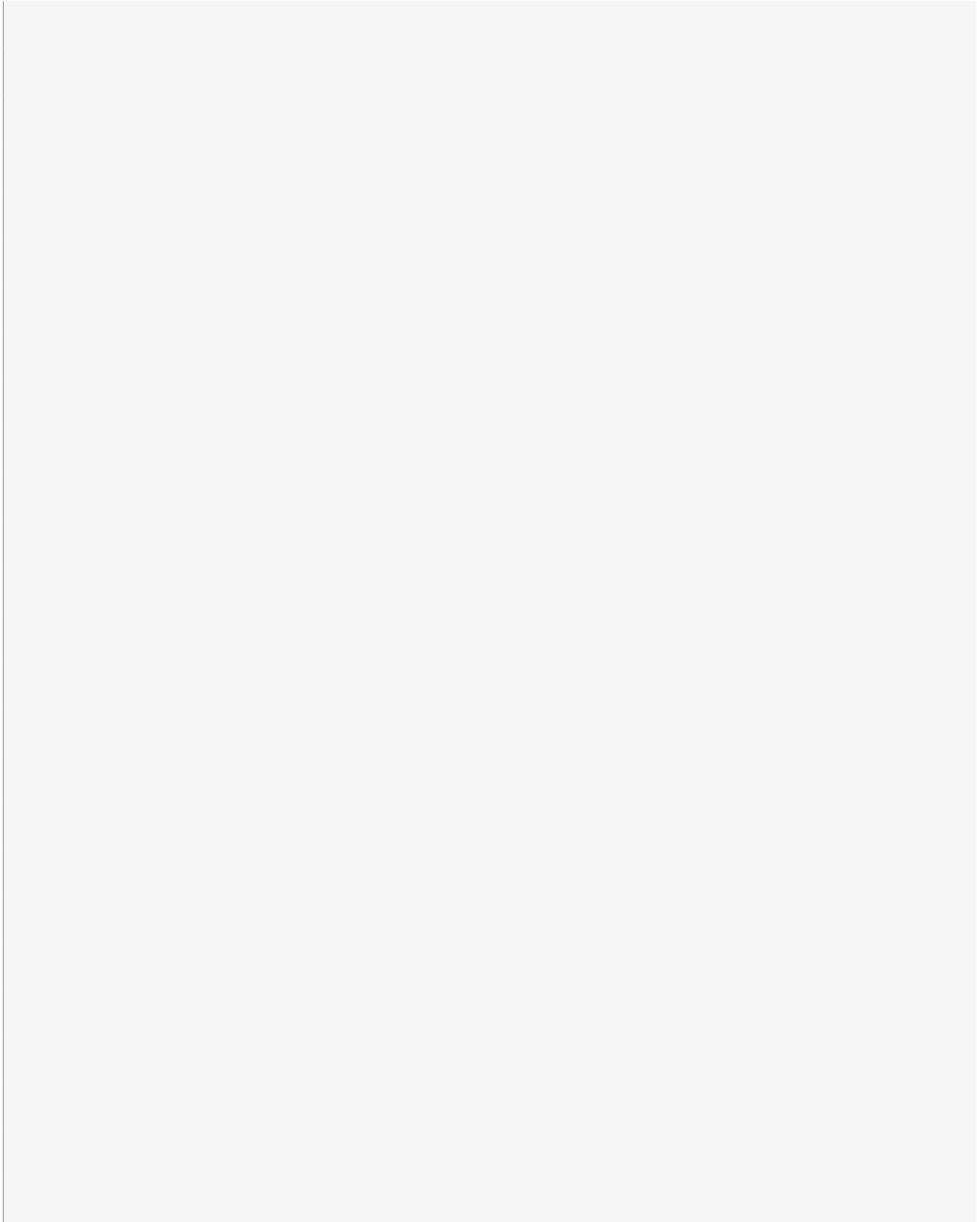
Start by listing wins. Reflect on what went well, so you're operating from a place of gratitude. Then review your Weekly Big 3. Did you meet your objectives? If not, give yourself partial credit. For example, if your goal was to call ten prospects but you reached eight, that's still 80% progress.

Next, evaluate your week. What worked? What didn't? How can you adjust? If you underestimated time (the Planning Fallacy), revise your expectations or adjust your schedule to get back on track.

Now look ahead. Revisit your goals and key motivations to stay focused on your "why." In the chaos of daily life, it's easy to lose sight of your reasons. Reviewing them regularly keeps you grounded. From there, decide what needs to happen next week. Choose your new Weekly Big 3, and you're one step closer to your goals.

The top of one mountain is the bottom of the next, so keep climbing.

ANDRÉ DE SHIELDS



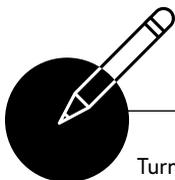
The Weekly Preview takes just 15–40 minutes, depending on how thorough you want to be. For bigger adjustments, do a Quarterly Preview, which reviews the past quarter and plans the next three months.

If progress stalls, it's okay to pivot. Strategies aren't sacred—they're flexible. Adjust your approach, explore alternative paths, and lean on your achievement community or a coach for support. You don't have to go it alone.

To summarize, here are the three key actions to achieve your goals:

1. Take the stairs: Break big goals into smaller steps.
2. Program your autopilot: Build habits and rituals to drive progress.
3. Adjust as you go: Use Weekly and Quarterly Previews to stay on track.

Follow these steps, and you'll not only build momentum but also finish the year strong.



Turn to page 122 for one more exercise, **EXERCISE 7**.

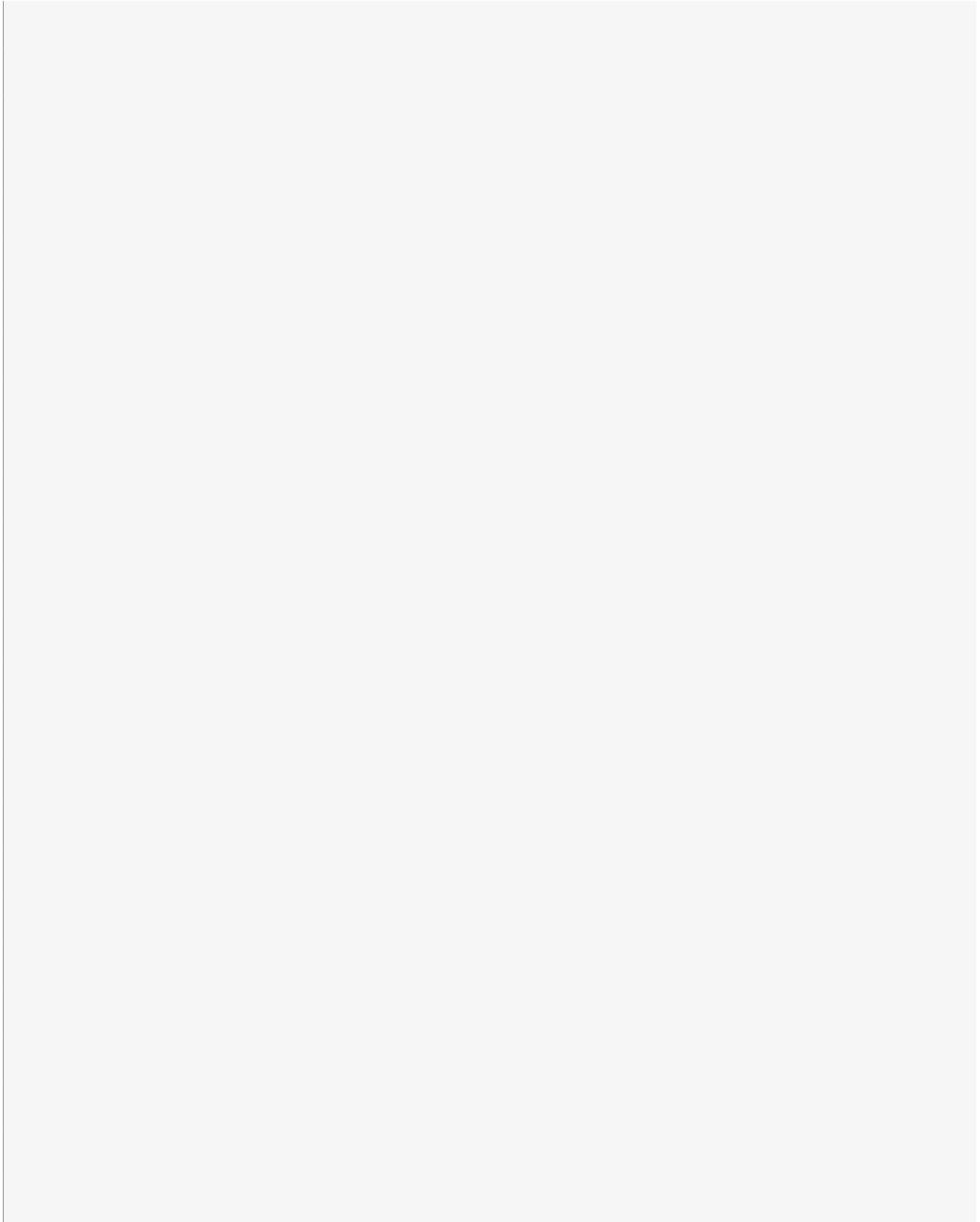
*The Best Planner for Goal Achievement* | The Full Focus Planner

Ready to put these best practices into daily action? The Full Focus Planner is designed to help you stay focused, organized, and on track. Built on the proven strategies of *Your Best Year Ever*, it's your companion for turning aspirations into accomplishments. [bestyearever.me/planner](https://bestyearever.me/planner)



The best way to predict the future is to invent it.

ALAN KAY



**BONUS 8**

## Activation Triggers

To achieve your goals, use implementation intentions—situational roadmaps that guide action. While goal intentions state what you want to do, Activation Triggers (implementation intentions) focus on when, where, and how. These triggers use if/then or when/then statements, like: "If I'm hungry before a meal, then I'll eat almonds," or "When I finish lunch, then I'll take a 15-minute walk."

Psychologist Peter Gollwitzer explains that if/then plans link specific cues to actions, making it easier to respond. Research shows these plans reduce decision fatigue and make goal progress feel automatic.

Stating a goal isn't enough. You need to plan for situations that prompt action. Here's how to use Activation Triggers:

**STEP 1:****IDENTIFY YOUR TRIGGERS**

For a SMARTER goal, find simple, actionable triggers. Triggers should make hard goals easier.

Examples:

- Program office lights to turn off at 6 PM.
- Hire a fitness trainer.
- Automate savings deposits.

Choose what fits your life and goals.

**STEP 2****OPTIMIZE YOUR TRIGGERS**

Make triggers work for you by setting them up in advance. For example, if you overwork, automate reminders or systems that encourage quitting on time. This reduces reliance on willpower.

## STEP 3

**PLAN FOR OBSTACLES**

Think ahead to what might throw you off track and plan responses. For example, if your goal is to leave work by 6 PM:

- If a call comes after 5:45 PM, let it go to voicemail.
- If a meeting runs late, tell the organizer you'll leave by 5:55 PM.
- If someone stops you on the way out, tell them you'll connect first thing tomorrow.

Preplanning replaces last-minute decisions with clear actions.

## STEP 4

**ADJUST UNTIL IT WORKS**

Not every trigger will work perfectly at first. If one fails, tweak it. The goal stays the same, but your approach can evolve. Small adjustments lead to big wins.

Start by identifying goal-relevant situations and obstacles. Write if/then statements and test them until they integrate into your routine. Activation Triggers make progress smoother and more consistent.

**BONUS 9**

## The 5 Rs of the Quarterly Preview

At the end of each quarter, it's helpful to step back and evaluate your goals using a process we call the 5 Rs.

First, take time to **rejoice**. When you reach a milestone or achieve a goal, pause to celebrate. Recognizing your wins keeps you motivated and reminds you why the effort is worth it.

Next, decide if you need to **recommit** to your goal. This is crucial when you feel like giving up. Refocus on your goal and reconnect with your why. What's at stake? What do you gain or lose by staying the course? Once you're clear, consider new strategies or resources. Remember, your goal is the what, but your strategy is the how. Strategies aren't sacred; you can change them if they're not working. Clinging to a failing strategy can derail your progress, but being adaptable keeps you on track.

If recommitting isn't an option, you may need to **revise** your goal. Perhaps it was set too high, or circumstances have changed. Be careful not to lower the bar just to avoid discomfort, but don't hold yourself to an impossible standard. A revised goal can still challenge and stretch you, just within reach of what's realistic.

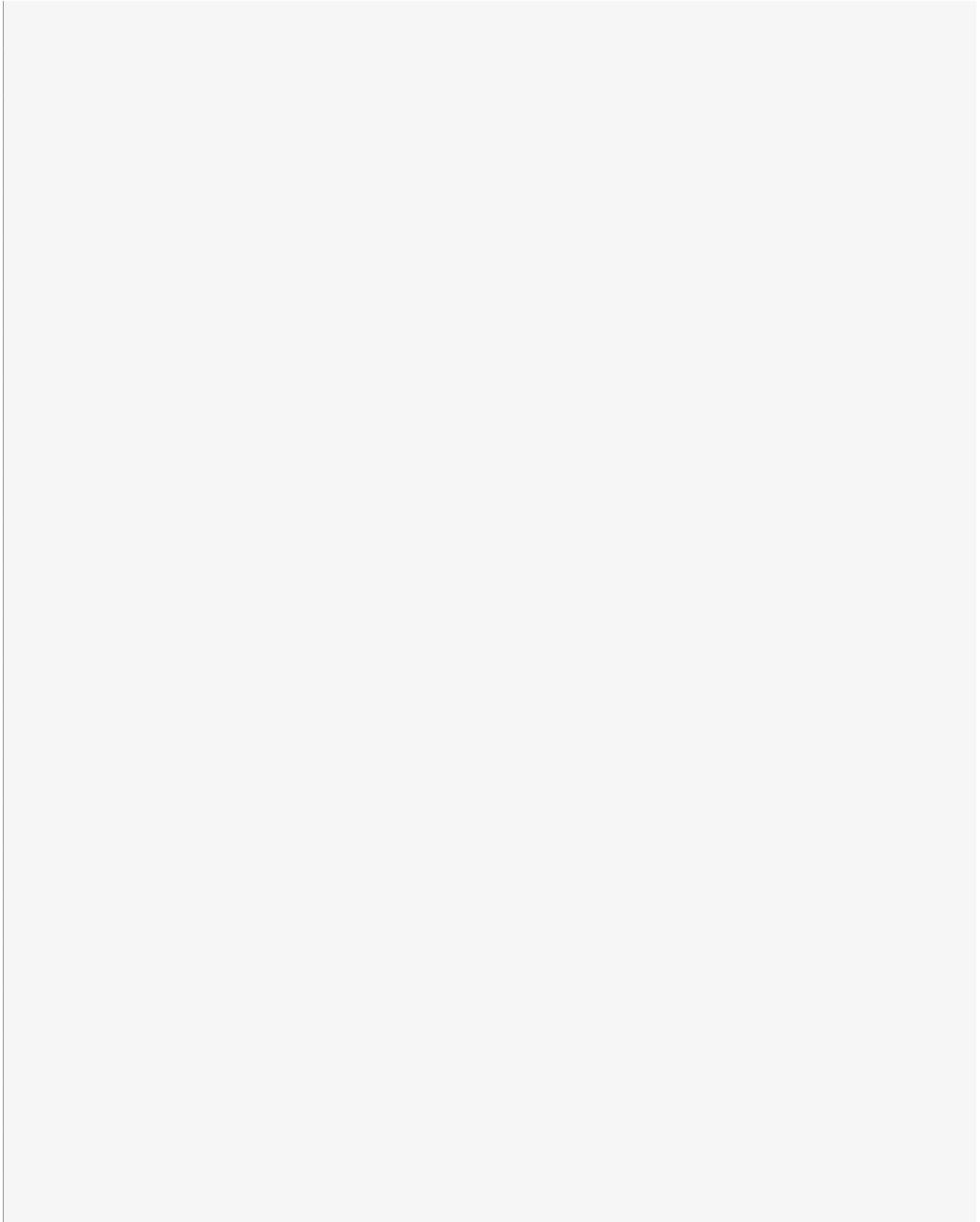
Sometimes, you'll need to **remove** a goal entirely. This should be a last resort, but it's necessary when a goal is no longer relevant or compelling. Keeping outdated goals on your list only adds unnecessary stress and guilt. Let it go and free up space for something that matters.

Finally, if you've completed or removed a goal, it's time to **replace** it with a new one. Progress doesn't stop just because a goal is achieved or abandoned. Replacing ensures you stay forward-focused and continue building momentum.

The 5 Rs—rejoice, recommit, revise, remove, replace—help you reset and refine your focus every quarter, ensuring you're always aligned with your most important goals.

Dreams do not come true just because you dream them. It's hard work that makes things happen.

SHONDA RHIMES



## EXERCISE 7

# Determining Your Next Steps

## INSTRUCTIONS AND EXAMPLE

Look at your goals and identify at least one next action for each goal you have scheduled for the upcoming quarter. You don't need a lot of detail. Don't overthink it. Just pick the next, most obvious step.

And along with next steps, it might be helpful to think about how you might use a daily habit or ritual to help you reach your goals.

Finally, take a moment and decide when you'll set your Weekly and Daily Big 3s, along with conducting your Weekly Preview. Build this into your daily rituals and Ideal Week. Remember, what gets scheduled gets done. Book appointments with yourself so that the urgent doesn't take priority over the important. You can do the Weekly Preview in your Full Focus Planner, but we've included one blank template to get you started, beginning on page 134.

# GOAL DETAIL

- BODY
- LOVE
- MONEY
- MIND
- FAMILY
- WORK
- SPIRIT
- COMMUNITY
- HOBBIES

**GOAL STATEMENT** Write your SMARTER Goal.

Run the Country Music Half Marathon by April 21.

ACHIEVEMENT GOAL     HABIT GOAL

**KEY MOTIVATIONS** Write, then rank, your key motivations.

- Running is a great way to stay in shape and, as a result, show up as my best self for my kids.
- If I don't run, I tend to get overwhelmed easily and my priorities, such as spending time with my family, can become skewed.
- Running is how I destress and help manage my anxiety.

**NEXT STEPS** List the first few projects or tasks that make up your goal.

- Set a running schedule with Jamie.
- Sign up to run with my church on Saturdays.

**CELEBRATION** Decide how you'll celebrate your success.

**GOAL PROGRESS** Track your achievement-goal progress.



**STREAKTRACKER™** Track your habit-goal progress.

<b>M1</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
<b>M2</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
<b>M3</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31

# GOAL DETAIL

- BODY
- MIND
- SPIRIT
- LOVE
- FAMILY
- COMMUNITY
- MONEY
- WORK
- HOBBIES

**GOAL STATEMENT** Write your SMARTER Goal.

---



---



---

ACHIEVEMENT GOAL     HABIT GOAL

**KEY MOTIVATIONS** Write, then rank, your key motivations.


**NEXT STEPS** List the first few projects or tasks that make up your goal.


**CELEBRATION** Decide how you'll celebrate your success.

---



---

**GOAL PROGRESS** Track your achievement-goal progress.



**STREAKTRACKER™** Track your habit-goal progress.

<b>M1</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
<b>M2</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
<b>M3</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31

# GOAL DETAIL

- BODY
- LOVE
- MONEY
- MIND
- FAMILY
- WORK
- SPIRIT
- COMMUNITY
- HOBBIES

**GOAL STATEMENT** Write your SMARTER Goal.

---



---



---

- ACHIEVEMENT GOAL     HABIT GOAL

**KEY MOTIVATIONS** Write, then rank, your key motivations.


**NEXT STEPS** List the first few projects or tasks that make up your goal.


**CELEBRATION** Decide how you'll celebrate your success.

---



---

**GOAL PROGRESS** Track your achievement-goal progress.



**STREAKTRACKER™** Track your habit-goal progress.

<b>M1</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
<b>M2</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
<b>M3</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31

# GOAL DETAIL

- BODY
- LOVE
- MONEY
- MIND
- FAMILY
- WORK
- SPIRIT
- COMMUNITY
- HOBBIES

**GOAL STATEMENT** Write your SMARTER Goal.

---



---



---

ACHIEVEMENT GOAL     HABIT GOAL

**KEY MOTIVATIONS** Write, then rank, your key motivations.


**NEXT STEPS** List the first few projects or tasks that make up your goal.


**CELEBRATION** Decide how you'll celebrate your success.

---



---

**GOAL PROGRESS** Track your achievement-goal progress.



**STREAKTRACKER™** Track your habit-goal progress.

<b>M1</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
<b>M2</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
<b>M3</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31

# GOAL DETAIL

- BODY
- LOVE
- MONEY
- MIND
- FAMILY
- WORK
- SPIRIT
- COMMUNITY
- HOBBIES

**GOAL STATEMENT** Write your SMARTER Goal.

---



---



---

- ACHIEVEMENT GOAL     HABIT GOAL

**KEY MOTIVATIONS** Write, then rank, your key motivations.


**NEXT STEPS** List the first few projects or tasks that make up your goal.


**CELEBRATION** Decide how you'll celebrate your success.

---



---

**GOAL PROGRESS** Track your achievement-goal progress.



**STREAKTRACKER™** Track your habit-goal progress.

<b>M1</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
<b>M2</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
<b>M3</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31

# GOAL DETAIL

- BODY
- LOVE
- MONEY
- MIND
- FAMILY
- WORK
- SPIRIT
- COMMUNITY
- HOBBIES

**GOAL STATEMENT** Write your SMARTER Goal.

---



---



---

ACHIEVEMENT GOAL     HABIT GOAL

**KEY MOTIVATIONS** Write, then rank, your key motivations.


**NEXT STEPS** List the first few projects or tasks that make up your goal.


**CELEBRATION** Decide how you'll celebrate your success.

---



---

**GOAL PROGRESS** Track your achievement-goal progress.



**STREAKTRACKER™** Track your habit-goal progress.

<b>M1</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
<b>M2</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
<b>M3</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31

# GOAL DETAIL

- BODY
- MIND
- SPIRIT
- LOVE
- FAMILY
- COMMUNITY
- MONEY
- WORK
- HOBBIES

**GOAL STATEMENT** Write your SMARTER Goal.

---



---



---

ACHIEVEMENT GOAL     HABIT GOAL

**KEY MOTIVATIONS** Write, then rank, your key motivations.


**NEXT STEPS** List the first few projects or tasks that make up your goal.


**CELEBRATION** Decide how you'll celebrate your success.

---



---

**GOAL PROGRESS** Track your achievement-goal progress.



**STREAKTRACKER™** Track your habit-goal progress.

<b>M1</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
<b>M2</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
<b>M3</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31

# GOAL DETAIL

- BODY
- LOVE
- MONEY
- MIND
- FAMILY
- WORK
- SPIRIT
- COMMUNITY
- HOBBIES

**GOAL STATEMENT** Write your SMARTER Goal.

---



---



---

ACHIEVEMENT GOAL     HABIT GOAL

**KEY MOTIVATIONS** Write, then rank, your key motivations.


**NEXT STEPS** List the first few projects or tasks that make up your goal.


**CELEBRATION** Decide how you'll celebrate your success.

---



---

**GOAL PROGRESS** Track your achievement-goal progress.



**STREAKTRACKER™** Track your habit-goal progress.

<b>M1</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
<b>M2</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
<b>M3</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31

# GOAL DETAIL

- BODY
- MIND
- SPIRIT
- LOVE
- FAMILY
- COMMUNITY
- MONEY
- WORK
- HOBBIES

**GOAL STATEMENT** Write your SMARTER Goal.

---



---



---

- ACHIEVEMENT GOAL     HABIT GOAL

**KEY MOTIVATIONS** Write, then rank, your key motivations.


**NEXT STEPS** List the first few projects or tasks that make up your goal.


**CELEBRATION** Decide how you'll celebrate your success.

---



---

**GOAL PROGRESS** Track your achievement-goal progress.



**STREAKTRACKER™** Track your habit-goal progress.

<b>M1</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
<b>M2</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
<b>M3</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31

# GOAL DETAIL

- BODY
- LOVE
- MONEY
- MIND
- FAMILY
- WORK
- SPIRIT
- COMMUNITY
- HOBBIES

**GOAL STATEMENT** Write your SMARTER Goal.

---



---



---

ACHIEVEMENT GOAL     HABIT GOAL

**KEY MOTIVATIONS** Write, then rank, your key motivations.


**NEXT STEPS** List the first few projects or tasks that make up your goal.


**CELEBRATION** Decide how you'll celebrate your success.

---



---

**GOAL PROGRESS** Track your achievement-goal progress.



**STREAKTRACKER™** Track your habit-goal progress.

<b>M1</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
<b>M2</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
<b>M3</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31

# GOAL DETAIL

- BODY
- MIND
- SPIRIT
- LOVE
- FAMILY
- COMMUNITY
- MONEY
- WORK
- HOBBIES

**GOAL STATEMENT** Write your SMARTER Goal.

---



---



---

ACHIEVEMENT GOAL     HABIT GOAL

**KEY MOTIVATIONS** Write, then rank, your key motivations.


**NEXT STEPS** List the first few projects or tasks that make up your goal.


**CELEBRATION** Decide how you'll celebrate your success.

---



---

**GOAL PROGRESS** Track your achievement-goal progress.



**STREAKTRACKER™** Track your habit-goal progress.

<b>M1</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
<b>M2</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31
<b>M3</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31

# WEEKLY PREVIEW

**AFTER-ACTION REVIEW** List 3–5 of your biggest wins from the week.

---

---

---

---

---

How far did you get on your Weekly Big 3?

	%
1	
2	
3	

What worked? What didn't? Why?

---

---

---

---

---

---

What will you continue or change?

---

---

---

---

---

---

**GOAL REVIEW & LIST SWEEP** Review your goals, lists, and notes, and update your task manager.

- GOAL REVIEW
- DELEGATED & DEFERRED TASKS
- DAILY NOTES
- TASK MANAGER

**STREAKTRACKER™** Track your habit-goal progress.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

**REJUVENATION** Identify 3 ways to sleep, eat, move, connect, or relax a bit better this week. Then schedule on the Daily Pages.

1	2	3
---	---	---

**WEEKLY OVERVIEW** Review upcoming week and mark commitments on the 7-day view on the following page.

- EVENTS
- PROJECTS
- TASKS
- OTHER COMMITMENTS

**WEEKLY BIG 3** Based on your goals and projects, pick 3 objectives for the coming week.

- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

SUNDAY

